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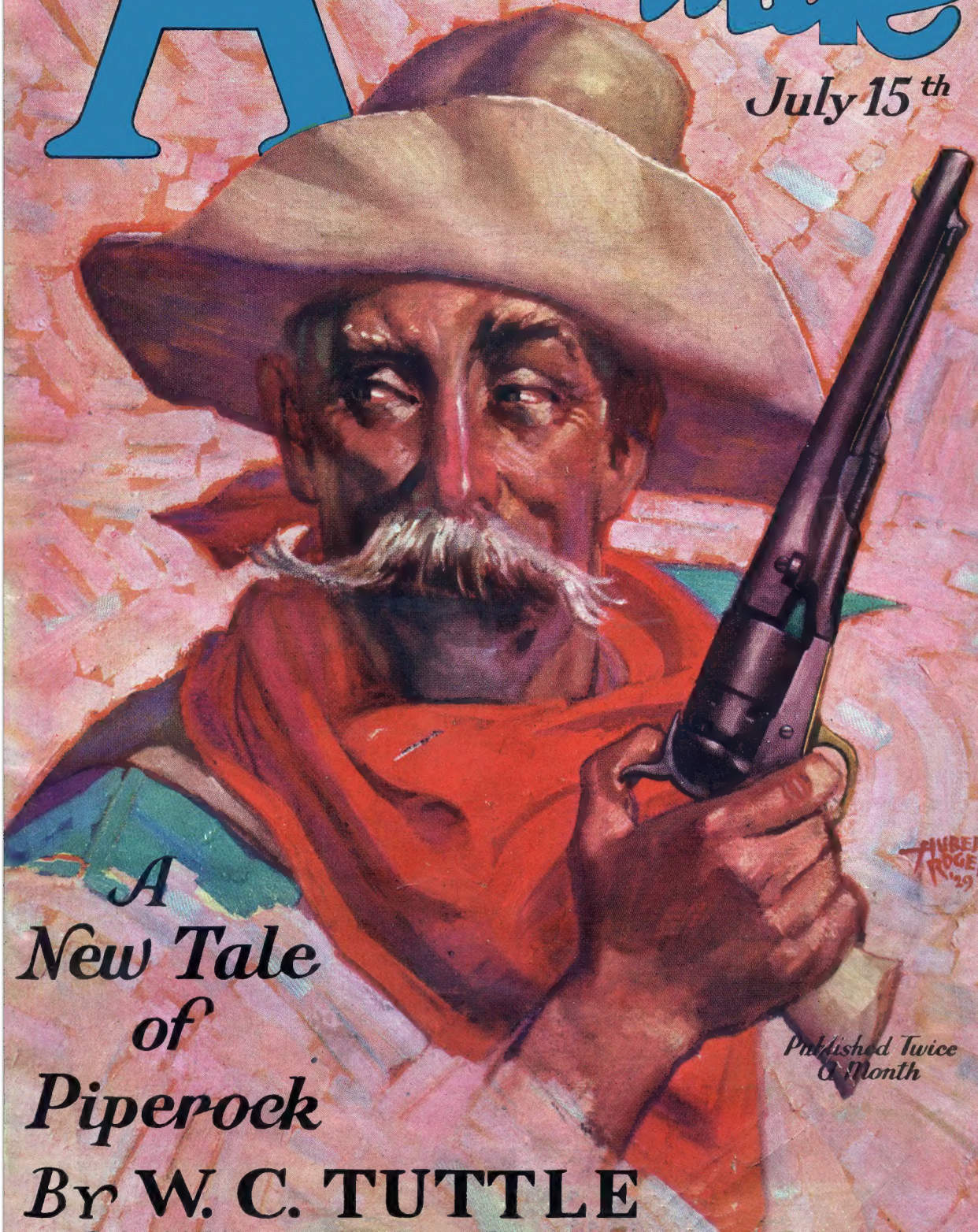

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A New Tale of Piperock

By W. C. TUTTLE

"Girls are foolish, I suppose, but that's the way God made us."

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Here's another screamingly funny

INJUN

OLD RUNNIN' WOLF claims that he's the son of a chief. Most Injuns do, as far as that's concerned; but Runnin' Wolf covers too many tribes in his claim to greatness. On one bottle of kidney cure he can become a son of Sittin' Bull. Give him a couple shots extra of hair tonic, and he claims Chief Joseph, of the Nez Perce tribe, as his father. A pint of corn liquor drives him plumb back to Pontiac; and I've knowed him to mourn a heap over the death of his sister, Pocahontas.

Runnin' Wolf is six feet six inches tall, and if it wasn't for the size of his nose he could dive out of sight in a shotgun barrel. Nobody knows how old he is, and nobody cares. He's jist a mean lookin' old war whoop, who lives in a teepee outside the town of Piperock, schemin' all the time to get money enough to buy alcohol, and a little left over for a poker game. Can he play that pastime? Give him two deuces, and he'll win more jackpots than any livin' aborigine.

At one time in his distant past, Runnin' Wolf traveled with a medicine show. The owner was one of them sleight-of-hand fellers, crooked as a snake in a cactus patch, and he taught Runnin' Wolf how to play winnin' poker. And that war whoop, comin' straight from a long line of horsethieves, et cettery, shore absorbed knowledge. I wouldn't play him for a two-bit piece, if he'd let me do the dealin'. Yaller Rock County knows him so well that he's in the sere and yaller leaf, as far as winnin' anythin' goes.

Me and Dirty Shirt Jones are settin' on the hitch rack in front of Buck Masterson's saloon one mornin', like a couple old buzzards, lookin' for something to happen. Dirty Shirt ain't very big, but he's got a man sized capacity for anythin' you might mention. His left eye is his predominatin' feature, bein' as it ain't noways fixed like a regular eye, but kinda darts hither and yon, finally comin' to rest in the northwest section of his eye socket, peerin' up at the angle between his crooked nose and his eyebrow. All of which gives Dirty a cockeyed expression.

Piperock story by W. C. TUTTLE

EERED

We're settin' there, tryin' to elect a Democrat President, when here comes old Runnin' Wolf, headin' across from the post office, trailin' his blanket.

"I ain't goin' t' lend that old marrow-gut a cent more," declares Dirty.

But Runnin' Wolf merely scratches his shoulders against the rack post, picks up the butt of the cigaret I've jist dropped and asks me for a match.

"Gittum letta," he says.

"Who got a letter?" asks Dirty.

"Me gittum letta."

"Who from?"

The old boy fishes out a dirty envelope from inside his shirt and hands it to me. In one corner of the envelope it says, "Barker Brothers Great Consolidated Shows".

"Dirty Dora prob'ly died and they're askin' Wolf to take his place," says Dirty Shirt. "Open it up—the war whoop can't read."

Inside was a single sheet of paper; on it was written, kinda sprawly—

I em cum to veesit yu sunn.
—CHEEF AXILGRISS

"What say?" asked the chief.

I reads it to him. He scratched his left knee with the toe of his right moccasin, and then he laughs kinda foolish.

"Who's Chief Axlegrease?" I asks.

"Long time ago I be with him in medicine show. Him Osage or Cherokee or somethin'."

"He's a hell of a lot like you, eh?" grunted Dirty.

"I'm a Sioux."

"Yeah—when you're sober."

"Pretty damn dry now."

"Yeah," says Dirty, "and if you don't quit drinkin' hair tonic, you'll have to eat moths to keep down the fur. So this here Axlegrease Injun is comin' to visit you, eh?"

"Um-m-m-m. Play damn bad poker."

"I suppose you'll skin him out of his moccasins, eh?"

"Um-m-m-m. Me no got money. Mus' have money for play poker."

"Yeah, we all found that out a long time ago, Mister Vanishin' Race."

It might be well to tell you somethin' about our town of Piperock and of the rest of Yaller Rock County. Piperock,

Yaller Horse and Paradise are set in a sort of triangle. Yaller Horse grew up from a one shack horsethieves' hangout. I mean she growed up in size, but her morals remained dormant. The town is kinda mismanaged by Tombstone Todd, Yuma Yates, Hardpan Hawkins and Smoky Potts, knowed by us Piperockers as Murderer's Row. Whenever folks enumerate the poisonous reptiles, they mention them four in connection with rattlers and copperheads.

Paradise is only of more consequence, because of a larger population. A horsethief got run out of Piperock, hid in a hole down the country, and out of spite he started a town, which they called Paradise. Bein' of the same minds and dispositions, Yaller Horse and Paradise buried the ax against each other, in order to concentrate against Piperock.

Piperock is a lovable old place, full of memories, tryin' to get along in a peaceable way and amount to something. If it wasn't for the folks in Piperock it would be a great old town. But even with our failin's, we're united. We don't need no outside help. We stand for a certain principle, and we back our own—right or wrong—and there ain't been an innocent bystander killed in years. We shoot straight. We go on the idea that if the law leaves us alone, we'll leave the law alone. Reciprocity, Magpie Simpkins calls it.

Magpie is built a whole lot like Runnin' Wolf, has sad, droopin' eyes, like a disappointed bloodhound, and a long mustache. And nature didn't cheat him, when it comes to noses. He's full of quaint ideas, all of which suffer a heap from missin' parts, and his main idea in life is to keep Piperock on the map.

Well, me and Dirty Shirt proceeds to forget all about Chief Axlegrease, and he ain't brought to our attention until the next day when a runaway bronc, bearin' Mighty Jones in the saddle, comes down through our main street like Paul Revere spreadin' his anti-English propaganda. Mighty ain't very big, but his hair is long and his voice is plenty resonant, as you might say.

When he's about in the middle of the town, wingin' along on that locoed animal, which is jist touchin' here and there, we hears him yelp—

"Ho-o-o-o-old your ho-o-o-orses!"

Jist one more *clickety-clack*, and he's faded out complete.

"That," says Dirty Shirt, "is damn' queer advice, under the circumstances. But mebbe he's like Old Testament Tilton, allus preachin' advice that he won't foller hisself."

"I'm pure in heart," replied Old Testament, who is also built awful high above his corns.

"Lotta bum watches have plenty good main springs."

"I'm meek and lowly," says Testament, pious-like.

"Yea-a-ah—right now."

"Well, f'r Gawd's sake!" snorts Magpie. "Will you tell me what this cavalcade is? Will you tell me—crip-puled crawlers!"

I DIDN'T blame Magpie for his remarks. This here cavalcade turns into the main street from the south, and if it ain't a circus, I'm a hairy tarantaler. In front is one of them big decorated wagons, with four horses, and on the driver's seat is a big fat Injun, all dressed up in a shiny plug hat, cutaway coat and a high white collar.

Tied behind that wagon is a scrawny lookin' elephant, behind which comes another big wagon—one of them Queen of Sheba float wagons—hauled by two pinto horses and driven by a fat squaw; and in that float is at least sixteen Injun kids, from one year to sixteen. Towin' behind that comes one of them steam pipe pianos, and a tow headed jigger in a red uniform is playin' "Sweet Adeline" as loud as he can.

The big Injun drives up along the old sidewalk and stops his team, while we stands there and gawps at him, until "Sweet Adeline" fades away to a hoarse whistle. The fat Injun takes off his hat, polishes it on his arm, puts it on his head and looks us over kinda dignified-like.

"I like see Runnin' Wolf," says he.

Dirty Shirt's eye circles and circles, finally stoppin' abruptly.

"That," says he, "must be Chief Axlegrease."

"Big Chief," says the fat aborigine.

"Ex-cuse me," grunts Dirty Shirt.

Them Injun kids sees some candy in Wick Smith's store window, and they all puts up a yelp for it. The old boy picked up a rock from the seat beside him, and the yelpin' stops. That buck shore knows family control, 'cause even the fat squaw ducked quick.

About that time Runnin' Wolf comes lopin' up the street. He heard that music, I reckon. He stopped and looked at the steam organ, stopped and looked over the family wagon, and finally arrived among us. Him and the fat buck looks each other over. The fat one cocks his plug hat over one eye and looked down at Runnin' Wolf.

"Hyah?" he snorts, kinda like an explosion.

"Purty damn' good!" explodes Runnin' Wolf.

"You git letter?"

"Got."

"I come visit."

"Hm-m-m-m-m-m-m!"

The big chief waved a fat arm to encompass his equipage.

"Purty good, eh? Belong me. Oil well gusher. Too damn' much money. Where you live?"

It kinda dawned on us that the old chief had made a pile in oil, and this was his idea of travelin' in state. I moved down and takes a look at the greasy faced jigger at the piano. He ain't very big and he looks tired.

"What kind of an outfit is this?" I asks him. He shakes his head, spits out in the dust and blinks considerable.

"Ay am de calli-yupe player," says he. "My name is Yergens. Das outfeet belongs to de Inchun. Ay am jus' de calli-yupe player."

"Rich Injun?" I asks.

"Ay am get pay for dis yob—you bet. Dis damn' road make me mees notes."

"Where are you from?" I asks.

"Ay am from Copenhagen."

"Play!" yells Axlegrease, and the Swede almost blew the tops off them pipes, and scared every bronc in the county.

Away they went, with Runnin' Wolf walkin' in the lead, and the parade follerin' him down to his little teepee, while the rest of us sets down on the sidewalk and laughs ourselves so dry that Buck Masterson does a rushin' business in a few minutes.

Some of the boys follered down to the teepee, and they comes back to tell us that inside the chief's wagon is a lion and a tiger.

"One of them big Affreecan lions," says Slim Hawkins. "Cross m' heart, if he ain't. And in the other end is one of them penitentiary pumas — with the stripes. Take a whole horse to feed them two f'r one day, not to mention that elephant. I've seen a lot of elephants in m' time, but I never seen one with a worse fittin' skin. He shore needs ironin' out. They got him staked to a tree and he's eatin' all the branches off; while them two buck Injuns are settin' there in Runnin' Wolf's wickiup, smokin' a pipe. The squaw and all the kids are cuttin' wood for the whoopee organ, and the Swede is actin' as horse wrangler and bull-cook. If that ain't a outfit, I'm a cow's nephew!"

About an hour later Yuma Yates, Tombstone Todd, Hardpan Hawkins and Smoky Potts rides in from Yaller Horse. They stands out there in the street for a while, lookin' around, before they invades Buck's place. It wouldn't take no Saint Peter to tell where them four will go when they die. Them four gents is hard for to get along with. Tombstone is the ringleader; him and his big buffalo horn mustache. In fact, they all kinda runs strong to hair, as far as that's concerned. They has a drink together, and we can see that they've been drinkin' on the way to town.

"Did it stop here?" asks Tombstone.

"What?" asks Buck.

"That red skinned war whoop and his circus."

"Oh, yea-a-ah—they're here. That's

Chief Axlegrease, a wealthy Nincopoop Injun, who struck oil. Him and Runnin' Wolf was in a medicine show together, and he's come to show off. He's the first Injun to ever git fancier than a hearse, when it comes to puttin' on the dog. He's got a whistle wagon, elephant, lions and taggers too numerous to mention—and a Swede."

"We seen it all," says Yuma, yawnin' wide and lettin' a full glass of red liquor drop down his throat. "Every hitch rack in Paradise is in ruins. Two horses went plumb into Hank Padden's saloon, and only one came out. They think the other one is under the bar, but they won't know until they git things cleared out. Half-Mile Smith wanted to telegraph for the militia, but Zeke Whittaker's wagon team ran straddle of a telegraph pole and the wires are all down. The last we seen of Hank he was loadin' a riot gun, swearin' that Custer would be avenged at last."

"YOU FELLERS ain't up here to mop up on the war whoop, are you?" asks Dirty.

"Not if he'll listen to reason," says Tombstone.

"Reason or no reason," says Magpie, "that Injun is bein' p'tected by Piperock, if anybody stops to ask you, Tombstone. He's a guest of our fair city, and as such, we stands behind him. If Paradise animiles are so danged ignorant that they stampedes regardless at sight of a few chariots and a misfit elephant, they ought to stand their loss."

"Oh, we don't mean no bodily harm to the Injun, Magpie. That ain't in our thoughts a-tall. But you don't need to get runty about it, as fer as that goes. We comes in peace, you understand—but p'pared for war."

"We shore do love peace," sighs Dirty, who is achin' for a crack at one of them Yaller Horsers, "but if there's any choosin' to be done, I've done made my selection."

"I'll shake dice with you t' see which one of us takes two," suggests Slim Hawkins to Dirty. "There's times when I kinda throw back to m' aboriginal ancestors, and at such times I hankers for hair."

"Peace," says Testament Tilton. "Peace, brothers. There's a time and a place for all things."

"Yeah, and I jist mopped this floor," said Buck kinda sad-like. "C'mon and everybody have a little drink on the house. No use goin' to war, unless we know what the shootin' is all about."

That buried the hatchet for the time bein', and them three thieves from Yaller Horse starts a poker game with Magpie, Testament and Slim Hawkins. Me and Dirty Shirt drifts down to Runnin' Wolf's teepee, kinda wishful to see what the layout looks like, and we meets Runnin' Wolf. The old buck looks kinda down in the mouth, but he stops and looks back.

"How're you and the circus comin'?" asks Dirty.

"Big mouth!" snorts Wolf. "Much money. Huh! Like play poker."

Dirty cocks his hat over one eye and looks at the old buck. Dirty knows how good the old boy is at poker, and he wonders how much Chief Axlegrease knows about the great American pastime.

"Likes poker, eh? Good player?"

"Hm-m-m-m-m! Talk too damn' much. Say I'm poor Injun. Huh! Needum fifty dolla."

"Will ten dollars set you up in business?" asks Dirty.

"Plenty. I go buy cards."

"What do I get out of it?" asks Dirty.

"Runnin' Wolf honest Injun."

"You git the ten, old-timer—and may your fingers never cramp. Soak this fat war whoop plenty."

"Plenty," agrees Runnin' Wolf, almost grinnin'.

Me and Dirty went on down to the teepee, and Chief Axlegrease looks us over as though we're poor relations. Them sixteen assorted kids sets on the edge of that float, like a lot of little mahogany faced mummies, while the fat old squaw fusses around the stew pot on a fire.

The Swede is busy with a rag, polishin' his steam piano, and every once in a while that lean lookin' lion almost choked to death over his own noises. The big striped cat has got his nose against the bars, sleepin' out loud. The elephant is roped to a tree near the Swede's musical wagon, and he seems a lot interested in what the Swede is doin'.

Dirty looks the fat Injun over, and says—

"Pretty swell outfit you got, Chief."

"Belong me. I got too damn' much money. Strike oil."

"Paid a lot for her, eh?"

"Sixty-fi' hundred dolla."

"Sixty-five hundred!"

"Um-m-m-m-m. Two wagon, one thousand. Six horse, twelve hundred; elephant, ten hundred; smoke organ, two thousand; lion, five hundred; tiger, five hundred. Plenty damn' good outfit, you bet."

"Buy out a circus?"

"Um-m-m-m-m-m. Plenty money. What's matter your eye?"

"That," said Dirty, "is none of your damn' business."

The fat Injun looks sad, and don't say anythin'. Dirty rubs the palm of his right hand on the leg of his chaps, and I know he's wonderin' just where to shoot that Injun to hit a vital spot under all that fat. The Swede in the red uniform ain't payin' no attention to us. He steps back and squints at all them metal pipes on his instrument, his cap cocked on one side of his bushy head.

The elephant leans forward on his ropes, and the slack jist gives him room to reach the Swede, who lets out a yelp you could hear in the next county, and begins waving his arms and legs; but the elephant took up the slack in that uniform so quick that it cut off the yelps. He kinda dangles the Swede in his trunk, like a baseball pitcher gettin' ready to throw, and all to once he heaves him up sideways, lets out a mighty *woosh!* and here comes the Swede, floatin' horizontal through the air, preceded by the soles of two of the biggest feet I ever seen.

That Swede never lost an inch of elevation nor did he change his horizontal position until them two big feet landed square on the chest of Chief Axlegrease and knocked him backwards through Runnin' Wolf's teepee. The Swede landed on the back of his neck, rolled over and sat up, blinkin' his eyes.

"My name is Yergens," says he. "Ay am de calli-yupe player, da's all."

"You ought to stick to it," says Dirty. "Didja have a nice trip?"

The Swede didn't say; he jist sets there blinkin', one eye on the elephant. The fat squaw comes over and looks inside the teepee, while the kids all set there, grinnin'. The show was jist built for them. It kinda strikes me that the old buck must run his family with an iron hand, 'cause the fat squaw turns around and waddles over to the line up of kids, and says—

"Make no noise—papa sleep."

She's either dumb as hell or she's got a sense of humor. The Swede gets to his feet and twists his clothes around to kinda fit his body.

"Some day," says he, "Ay am going to keek hal from that brute."

"Yeah," says Dirty, "that's great. But if you're wise, you'll stick to your calli-yupe, Jergens."

"Ay am mad, by yinks! Das har yob no goot. Work for Inchun! Ay am free man, pas' twanty-two, and dis Inchun business mak' me seek. Ay don' like Inchun."

CLANK! A can of beans hits the Swede in the back of the head and knocks his cap over his nose. The squaw threw it, and she's got another can, in case this one didn't register. But it did. Jergens straightens up, puts his cap on backwards and strikes a dignified pose and points his nose to the sky.

"O-o-o-o-o-oo lee-e-e-e oh layee-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e," he yodels. "O-o-o-oh lee-e-e-e oh layee-e-e-e, oh lay-hee-e-e-e-e, hoo-o-o-o-o-o-o."

"Sing good," grins the squaw.

The Swede stops, rubs his head kinda

hard and goes back to his steam organ, where he leans and looks at the elephant. I don't reckon the Swede remembers jist what happened, but he's got a suspicion. One of the Injun kids hops off the wagon, picks up the can of beans and gives it back to the squaw.

"Do it ag'in, mamma," says he.

"Mamma busy."

Me and Dirty wanders back to town. Chief Axlegrease was still asleep, I reckon. We finds Runnin' Wolf at the end of the street, talkin' with Tombstone Todd, and we wonders what they're holdin' a council over. Ordinarily Tombstone wouldn't speak to the old war whoop.

But we found out, after them Yaller Horsers had gone home. Magpie got it from Smoky Potts, who can't stand much liquor. It seems that them four crippled crawlers have been figurin' on startin' a Wild West Show. Smoky was a horse wrangler with the outfit from the 101 Ranch for a while, and when they saw Chief Axlegrease go through Paradise they decides to annex his outfit and start their show.

"They ain't got money enough to even hire the Swede," says Dirty. "That old Injun paid sixty-five hundred for the outfit, and he wouldn't sell for a million. Them Yaller Horsers make me laugh. Start a show!"

"Goin' to call it 'The Yaller Horse Wild West'," says Magpie. "Huh! Why, Piperock could start one a lot bigger 'n' better. I'd be willin' to head the aggregation."

"You would," says Dirty.

"I would—and guarantee a success. Piperock is jist as well able to buy that Injun out as Yaller Horse is."

"Yaller Horse ain't bought it out yet. I seen Tombstone Todd talkin' to old Runnin' Wolf, and I'll betcha they're framin' up somethin' on Axlegrease."

"Runnin' Wolf must be," grins Buck Masterson. "He bought two new decks of red backed playin' cards."

Me and Dirty and Magpie left Buck's place about midnight, and decided to go down to Runnin' Wolf's wickiup and see what's goin' on. There's a lantern in the teepee, and we hears voices. Goin' kinda careful-like, we gets close to the teepee. That float wagon is covered with dark humps, where the squaw and their sixteen offsprings are wrapped in blankets and plenty slumber.

Them two buck Injuns don't hear nothin', 'cause they're playin' poker in the teepee. The Swede is propped up against a roll of blankets, snorin' plenty, while Chief Axlegrease and Chief Runnin' Wolf play poker on a blanket, with the lantern danglin' from a pole. The flap of the tent is wide open.

"Money all gone," states Axlegrease. "Plenty money in bank—no money here."

"Bet horse," suggested Runnin' Wolf. "How much you pay?"

"Two hundred dolla."

"Too damn' much; I bet hundred dolla."

"Deal."

Runnin' Wolf took plenty time dealin'. He got up, grunted a few times and sat down again—with the deck in his hands. Then he dealt slow.

"Bet one horse."

"Good! Raise hundred dolla."

"Bet two mo' horse."

"Raise two hundred. No more money. I got fo' aces."

Chief Axlegrease grunted and threw down his cards.

"You lose six horse," said Runnin' Wolf.

"My deal."

Both men passed. On the next deal Chief Axlegrease lost his elephant on a six horse bet. This time Runnin' Wolf had four kings. They passed on Axlegrease's deal—as usual—and on the next hand Runnin' Wolf won the lion, tiger and four sets of harness. He had four queens. On his own deal Chief Axlegrease wanted to bet, but Runnin' Wolf passed.

This time old Runnin' Wolf got up again, turned around once for luck and sat down again—holdin' the cards. We watched the deal, and I distinctly saw

Chief Axlegrease look at his cards and slide them under the blanket. But he still had cards in his hand.

"How many?" asked Runnin' Wolf.

"No cards."

"No draw, dealer," grunted Runnin' Wolf.

"Pass," said Axlegrease.

"Bet one five hundred dolla wagon?" queried Runnin' Wolf. "I ante one lion."

"Good! I bet two five hundred dolla wagon."

"I raise one lion."

Chief Axlegrease thought it over.

"I got smoke organ, two thousand dolla. I call one lion and raise smoke organ."

"Fifteen hundred dolla, eh?" said Runnin' Wolf. "I call with one elephant and three hundred dolla cash, and raise one hundred dolla cash."

"Good! I call two set harness. What you got?"

"Plenty," grunted Runnin' Wolf, and spreads his hand.

Chief Axlegrease didn't say a word. He leaned forward, grabbed Runnin' Wolf by his thin neck and lifted him off the blanket. Old Wolf pasted him one in the belly and they went down together, landin' on top of the Swede, who let out a yell, like one pipe of his calli-yupe—the high pitched one. Somebody kicked the lantern out.

There's plenty moonlight outside, but it's shore dark in that teepee. Out comes the Swede, turns over twice and lands under the float wagon. Then out comes Runnin' Wolf and Chief Axlegrease. They fall in a heap, and Runnin' Wolf breaks loose, gits to his feet and lopes away in the night, makin' plenty good on his nickname. Chief Axlegrease lets out a weak war whoop, crawls to his feet and takes out after Runnin' Wolf.

The Swede must have hit the runnin' gears of that wagon, 'cause he's under there, singin' at the top of his voice:

> Ay vas born in Minnie-sota,
> Den Ay came to Nort' Da-a-akota;
> Ride on Yim Hill's beeg red vagon,
> Yeeminy, I feel for fight!

"What's the matter, mamma?" pipes up one of the papooses. "I hear papa yell."

"Sh-h-h-h-h," grunts the fat squaw. "Papa restless."

WE SNEAKED inside the teepee and lit a match. There's both hands on the blanket, right where they laid 'em down. Runnin' Wolf had four aces and the joker, and Chief Axlegrease had four aces. The deck is still there, and with one of them hands, it's a full deck. There's cards scattered all over the place, and we follered Runnin' Wolf's trail half way to town and he's still sheddin' red backed cards.

"Well," says Dirty Shirt, "I reckon Runnin' Wolf wins the circus. I seen Chief Axlegrease hide the hand Wolf dealt him, and ring in a cold one from under his leg."

"All I seen was Runnin' Wolf sneak a cold deck from inside his shirt," laughed Magpie. "They had one regular deck. Runnin' Wolf had sets of four aces, four kings, four queens planted where he could get 'em for each bet, and he had one whole deck frozen for the grand climax; but Axlegrease stole them four aces and played 'em against the four aces and a joker Runnin' Wolf dealt himself from the cold deck."

"Well," said Dirty Shirt, "you got to give Runnin' Wolf a lot of credit for runnin' less 'n ten dollars up to a sixty-five hundred dollar circus and all the loose money the oil well Injun had with him. That war whoop knows a lot about poker—and he can outrun Axlegrease, that's a cinch."

The next mornin' we finds the Swede in front of Buck's saloon, settin' on the sidewalk. His uniform is split down the back and he's shy one cap. One eye is all purple, and he's lost a couple front teeth.

"Ay am t'rough," says he, sad-like. "Dat Inchun got no money now. Never since Ay come from Copenhagen do Ay get so many hurts. Ay am queet dis yob. De beeg Inchun seet on de vagon, with

two barrel gon in hees hand, and hees say, 'Ay shoot hal from somebody pretty queek. Ay have been rob.' De lion and tiger not been feed for two day. Ay tal heem so, and hees say she feed pretty queek, when other Inchun comes back. Ay no git pay for de yob, an A'm bruck. Das is no place for calli-yupe player, by yimminy."

"How about a little drink?" I asks.

"Val, Ay take drink alcohol, please."

That calliope player's insides must have been made of rubber. He took a big scoop of raw alcohol and never grunted. Buck bought him another, jist to see him drink, and then Magpie bought one.

"My name is Yergens," says he. "Olaf Yergens, from Copenhagen."

"Write it down, Buck," says Magpie. "We'll have to put somethin' on his tombstone. This here Swedish jigger is embalmed right now."

While we're talkin', Smoky Potts, of Yaller Horse, comes in. He offers to buy a drink, and we're so astonished that we accepts. Jergens takes another scoop of raw alcohol, and Smoky looks him over curious-like.

"Ain't that the jigger who plays the hot water accordion?" asks Smoky.

"Ay am de calli-yupe player," says Olaf, kinda bat eyed. "Ay queet de yob. You see, de Inchun played poker and loses de calli-yupe and everyt'ing. He can't pay my vages, so Ay queet de yob. Ay am Olaf Yergens, from Copenhagen."

"In alcohol," adds Magpie, "a few yards of bandages, and you're a first class mummy, Olaf."

"Who won all them there things?" asks Smoky.

"Runnin' Wolf," grins Dirty Shirt. "He cold decked the fat war whoop, and the last we seen, Runnin' Wolf was leadin' by a shirt tail."

"You mean Runnin' Wolf owns the whole danged circus?"

"From the neck yoke to the elephant."

"I'll be danged! Well, I've got t' be joggin' along."

After Smoky pulled out we put Olaf in a chair and folded his hands. Four big glasses of raw alcohol is enough to pickle a rattlesnake. We started a game of seven-up and are goin' along nicely, when Dirty Shirt gits a sudden idea.

"By golly, I've got it!" he snorts. "Runnin' Wolf is down at Yaller Horse, tryin' to sell that outfit. Smoky Potts comes up to find out if Runnin' Wolf did win that outfit, and now he's beatin' back there to make the deal."

"That's a cinch!" snorts Magpie. "What's to be done?"

"Morally," says Dirty Shirt, "I own half of it, 'cause I staked Runnin' Wolf to ten dollars, and he'd have to split the profit with me."

Magpie almost dragged Dirty Shirt out of his chair.

"C'mon!" he yelps. "We'll spike their pants to the floor."

We didn't know what it was all about, but we seen 'em headin' for Judge Steele's little office. Scenery Sims, the sheriff, comes in and sets down with us. Scenery is about as big as a quart bottle, and he talks with a queer, squeaky voice. He knows the world ain't none too good, and it worries him a heap to think he can't find out how to make it better.

Scenery wasn't in town yesterday, so he don't know a thing about the Injun circus. Magpie and Dirty comes back, and Dirty hands Scenery a legal paper. It's an attachment on one-half the circus, demanding one-half of the outfit, or the sum of three thousand two hundred and fifty dollars, bein' as the valuation is claimed to be sixty-five hundred dollars.

"What damn' circus is this?" squeaks Scenery.

"It's down at Runnin' Wolf's teepee," explains Magpie. "You can't miss it. We'll go down with you, Scenery."

"S'pose I've got t' serve it. Well, c'mon. Looks funny t' me. How did Dirty Shirt ever git to ownin' half a circus?"

"Lotta things you don't know," says Dirty Shirt.

We leads Scenery down there, and his eyes kinda bug out when he sees all that aggregation. On top of the animal wagon

sets Chief Axlegrease, with a double barrel shotgun across his lap. The squaw and the kids are all under the other wagon, sleepin' in the shade. The elephant is backed against the tree and he's tore off every branch in reach. I reckon that's all the food he's had since they arrived. The lion acts as sore as a boil, and I'll bet he's hungry enough to eat hay.

"What you want?" asks the chief.

Scenery climbs up on a wheel and hands him the attachment. Axlegrease opens it up, upside down and looks it over.

"What say?" he asks, and Dirty takes it back and reads it out loud.

"Um-m-m-m-m! Man own half, eh? How he get half?"

"I'm sheriff," states Dirty Shirt, pointin' at himself. "That paper says a man owns half this damn' circus, *sabe?* I take half this circus for him."

"You take?" Axlegrease opens his mouth wide and stares at Scenery. "You take?"

"I take."

"You git!" Axlegrease shoves both barrels of that shotgun down in Scenery's face. "You git fast!"

SCENERY is kinda hypnotized by them twin tunnels, and he backs plumb into that elephant, which kinda takes him to his bosom, as you might say. Scenery don't say a word, but his lips move in prayer. The elephant kinda makes a little squealin' noise, as though he was tickled stiff, and then he spins Scenery around, like one of the band leaders whirls his stick, and tossed him plumb up into that tree.

Scenery turned over, caught the open seat of his chaps on a snag limb, and hung there upside down, ten feet above the elephant's reach.

"Kill the dirty brute!" yells Scenery. "Kill him before he kills me!"

"They don't climb trees," says Magpie. "Stay where you are, Scenery."

The limb kinda cracks a little, and Scenery says:

"Now I lay me down to sleep; I—I pray—I—I pray—"

"I dunno who you're prayin' to," says Dirty Shirt, "but you don't need to lie about your position."

"This limb is gittin' weak!" wails Scenery. "Can'tcha help a feller? The blood is all rushin' to m' head."

"It can't leak out," says Dirty, "so don't let that worry you. Anyway, you seen your duty and you done it, Scenery. You're high and dry in the matter."

"If this limb ever breaks, I'm a goner—and if it don't break, I'll die, anyway."

"Either way we lose a sheriff," says Magpie. "Well, them is things we have to face in this life. I always said you was born to be hung, but I didn't never suppose it would be upside down. If you quit jigglin', you might die natural."

"I ain't jigglin'; it's that dang Injy rubber ox doin' it. Somebody cut him loose, won't you, before he uproots the tree?"

Magpie walks a little closer to Axlegrease, who seems to be enjoyin' it.

"Who takes care of the elephant?" asks Magpie.

Axlegrease shrugs his fat shoulders and sighs real deep.

"Damn' Swede!" he says. "He go way."

"Can he handle the elephant?"

"Um-m-m-m-m."

Pop! That limb busted up close to the tree, and poor Scenery turns over once, lands all spraddled out on the elephant's back, like a flyin' squirrel. I reckon the shock was too much for the elephant, 'cause he jist made a noise like one of them slip horns, swayed his whole weight on that big rope around his hind leg, and the rope busted like a twine string.

Mebbe the elephant wasn't expectin' to break loose, and when he did it was too late to miss the big animal wagon. He hit jist above the right front wheel, and the shock sent Chief Axlegrease up in the air, from whence he descended on top of Scenery Sims, and away went that runaway elephant, headin' for the open country, blastin' away like a trumpet at every stride, while Scenery and Chief

Axlegrease, arms wrapped around each other's necks, suspendin' out from each side like a pair of pack sacks, went along with the elephant.

I took a look around, and there goes mamma and her sixteen copper colored offsprings, headin' for Piperock like a flock of scared quail.

"Dirty," says I, "I reckon your attachment took."

"Looks thataway, Ike."

"We'll do the proper thing, under the circumstances," says Magpie. "Git the harness on them horses and we'll move this outfit up to the liverystable, where they'll be safe from all harm."

"Meanin' Yaller Horse, eh?" grins Dirty.

"Well, yea-a-ah. C'mon."

We had quite a parade among us. I drove the animal wagon, Magpie drove the big float, while Dirty Shirt rode on the musical boiler, towin' behind Magpie's outfit. Pete Gonyer, who runs the stable, yelped like a peevish wolf. He didn't want no danged circus in his stable. Wasn't nobody goin' to stable lions and tigers in his stable—not if he was alive to see it.

"Where's the elephant?" he asks, after we've stabled the outfit.

"Scenery Sims went out for a ride," says Dirty Shirt.

"On the elephant?"

"Right on to him, Pete."

"Took nerve, didn't it?"

"All he had. You better feed them lions and tigers."

"Feed 'em—what with?"

"Listenin' to 'em right now, I don't reckon they'd be particular. Mostly they eat dead horses."

"I ain't got no dead horses."

"Well," says Magpie, "if them two cats git loose, you will have. Them things are attached by the law, and it's up to you to guard 'em with your life."

"Thasso? Huh! This place gits locked up right now. I'll move out every danged bronc in the place—and let nature take her course. Guard 'em with *my* life? Who the hell is takin' liberties like that with my life? If Scenery Sims wants these here animiles guarded, let him quit lopin' around on a elephant and take care of 'em hisself. Them is my sentiments."

"He'll prob'ly be mad at you, Pete," says Dirty Shirt. "You better be here and let him stable the elephant."

"I'll put them broncs out in the corral, and I'll wait a reasonable length of time. If he ain't here by that time—well, I'm runnin' a livery stable—not a damn' jungle, I'll tell you that."

Them two cats smell horse, and they're clawin' at the bars and makin' all kinds of noises. The horses ain't noways meek and mild themselves, and Pete has a man sized job in gettin' 'em out past that cage.

We went back to Buck's place and had a drink. We shore needed one, after what had happened. Somebody suggests that we go huntin' for the remains of Scenery and Chief Axlegrease, but we don't go. Scenery wouldn't be the first sheriff of Yaller Rock County to pass out with his boots on. Mrs. Axlegrease and her sixteen offsprings are perched on the sidewalk across the street, waitin' for papa to come back. I reckon they've got plenty faith in his ability to take punishment, 'cause they're eatin' candy while they wait.

THE SWEDE is still a little woozy, but willin' to imbibe, if we'll buy. We gave him a slug of alcohol, and he grows reminiscent in Swedish. We gave him another shot, and he tried to start a war with all of us.

"Ay am strong man," he declares. "Ay feel for fight."

And then he turns Swedish agin.

"The elephant busted loose," Magpie tells him. It took Olaf a long time to get this idea.

"You say das bull bruck de rup?"

"Shore—broke the rope. He's gone away."

"Yeeminy! Das bull is bad. He teep ofer house. Where he goes?"

"Nobody knows. Do you reckon he'd hurt anybody?"

"Das bull like to play. Ay tal you something—" and then he makes us a long speech in Swedish, his eyes jist poppin' when he finishes.

"That's different," says Magpie, solemn-like. "You get all our votes. What'll you have to drink?"

"Ay tak' scoop from alcohol, t'anks. You good faller."

About fifteen minutes later Scenery Sims comes staggering in through the back door. If Scenery ain't a first class wreck, he'll do, until we do get one.

He staggers up to the bar and looks us over, kinda pop-eyed.

"Fall off?" asks Dirty.

Scenery nods and fingers his throat.

"Fuf-fuf-five tut-tut-times. And every tut-time that dud-damn' elephant pup-put me back. The la-last tut-time, he pup-put me too fuf-far."

Scenery's voice went up so high it broke off, and his chin quivers from the tension.

"Where's the elephant?" I asks.

"Huh-huntin' for me, I s'pose. Can I have a drink?"

"Where's Chief Axlegrease?"

"He fell off in a cactus patch. Gimme liquor, can'tcha?"

We got Scenery quieted down after six or eight drinks, and he starts braggin' about what a rider he is. About that time Tombstone Todd, Yuma Yates, Hardpan Hawkins and Smoky Potts ride in, tie their broncs and come in. They look Scenery over.

"What happened to him?" asked Tombstone.

"I rode the Injy rubber ox to a fare-thee-well and never pulled leather," brags Scenery. "Match that, can you?"

Tombstone cuffs his hat over one eye and considers Scenery.

"You rode what?"

"That danged elephant."

"Our elephant?"

"Your—say, have *you* got one, too?"

"We've got the only one there is in Yaller Rock County."

"No you ain't—you ain't got the one I rode. Nobody ain't got him. He's what you might call a independent elephant."

"Uh-huh. You're speakin' of the one the Injun brought here?"

"Yeah, and the one what took the Injun away from here, too, if you want to be particular."

Tombstone looks us over kinda mean-like.

"We're holdin' Piperock responsible f'r any harm done to that elephant," says he. "You see, we own that aggregation of jungle beasts."

"Thasso?" says Magpie. "How come you own it, Tombstone?"

"Bought out Runnin' Wolf."

"We're up here to take the outfit back to Yaller Horse," says Smoky.

"Barrin' my legal claim, you might," says Dirty Shirt.

"Your what?" roars Yuma. "Say that agin, feller."

"It's thisaway," grins Dirty. "I staked Runnin' Wolf with poker money to play with Axlegrease, and Runnin' Wolf promises me half what he wins. The fat Injun says the outfit is worth sixty-five hundred dollar, so I levies my attachment on half of the circus, or asks thirty-two hundred and fifty dollar in cash."

"You got any legal papers to prove he promised you half?" roars Tombstone.

"I've got Ike Harper for a witness, ain't I, Ike?"

"You shore have," says I. "I heard every word of it."

"Anyway," says Dirty, "my paper has been served, and we've got the whole works, except the elephant, locked up in the livery stable, until this here modest claim of mine has been satisfied at one hundred cents on every dolla."

"But we bought the whole works from Runnin' Wolf!" yowls Yuma. "We've got his mark on a bill-of-sale."

"Arrest him f'r obtainin' money under false pretense," suggests Buck.

"Now, listen t' me," says Yuma. "We expected Piperock to do us dirt. It ain't no surprise. But we're here to git them animiles—and git 'em we will. All the legal papers in the world won't stop us. Ain't that right, boys?"

"Right," says Tombstone.

"What the hell's this comin' in?" grunts Magpie.

We all runs to the doorway. Here comes Eph Whittaker, standin' up on a big load of hay, drivin' like a Roman chariot driver, and his pinto team on the dead run. They go through town so danged fast that you can hear Eph's whiskers poppin' in the wind; and as far as you can see 'em, they're still goin' high and handsome, and about two hundred yards behind 'em is that danged elephant, trunk stretched out, tail stretched out, chasin' that load of hay. He don't pay no attention to the town, but when them three broncs from Yaller Horse see that apparition goin' past, they take the hitch rack with 'em, and starts off across country, buckin' and bawlin'.

Tombstone, Yuma, Hardpan and Smoky take out after their horses, runnin' and swearin', while the rest of us sets down on the sidewalk and has a good laugh. Even Olaf Jergens from Copenhagen got a laugh out of it.

"Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho!" he whoops. "Das elephant hungry, by yimminy. I buy drink, if I have money."

It was worth a lot to see them four sinners from Yaller Horse chasin' their runaway broncs; so we treated the Swede liberally. About fifteen minutes later Chief Axlegrease limps in from the lower end of town, stoppin' now and then to pick out some cactus. He sets down on the sidewalk with his family, but they don't pay any attention to him. After while me and Dirty go over to see him.

"You take circus?" he asks.

"Shore did," grins Dirty. "Runnin' Wolf won it from you, and he's supposed to give me half, because I staked him to play poker with you; but he went down to Yaller Horse and sold it to four men down there. I locked her up 'cause I own half of it, *sabe?*"

"Mm-m-m-m-m-m. Where's Runnin' Wolf?"

"He's down at Yaller Horse or Paradise, prob'ly spendin' the money he got."

"Um-m-m-m-m."

He gits up, picks out a few more cactus spines, speaks to his family, and away they go, travelin' in single file, headin' down the road toward Paradise.

"Well, there's one objector out of it," grins Dirty. "If we can send Yaller Horse down the road, talkin' to themselves, we've got a circus."

YALLER HORSE didn't show up that afternoon, but we wasn't fooled by that. We *sabe* that bunch pretty good. Eph Whittaker was intendin' to unload that hay at the livery stable, but he ain't never come back yet. Magpie wanted to take a posse and go after that elephant, but none of us had any desire to hunt elephants.

"That's Runnin' Wolf's share he sold to Yaller Horse," sayd Dirty. "Let 'em worry about that hay burnin' quadruped —we'll keep the lion and tiger."

Well, we had a few more drinks, and Dirty Shirt made me a present of the lion. I took him. It was the first lion I ever owned. It was almost dark when we went down to look at our animals. The stable was locked, but we busted open the back door and went in, takin' Olaf Jergens with us. Olaf is sufferin' from acute alcoholism and a desire for music. The calli-yupe is in the stable, but there ain't no steam in her.

"Ay am de calli-yupe player," declares Olaf. "Ay vant moosic."

"That's fine," says Dirty, who is so cockeyed that he can't even see Olaf. "We've got to have a musician, Ike; so we better take the Swede in partnership. Olaf, you are now an owner in a circus. What do you think of that?"

"Ay am de calli-yupe player. My name is Yergens and Ay am from Copenhagen." Dirty tried to bow to him, and hit his head on the lion cage.

"What do you think you are, a woodpecker?" I asks, holdin' the lantern up. "Instead of knockin' your head against wood, you better figure out some way to save this outfit. If Yaller Horse comes back, we've got a fight on our hands."

We went into executive session right there.

"You can't hide an outfit like thish," declares Dirty, owlish-like. "There's sixsh horshes in the corral, b'longin' to us, but they ain't worth mush. Our visible assets are the lion and tagger. They're worth money. Wonner what their names are? Olaf, what's the names of lion and tagger?"

"De lion," says Olaf, "iss Chudas, unt der tiger iss Chessie Chames."

"That's a swell name for that pet of mine," says I.

"He kill seex men," says Olaf.

"And," says Dirty, "everybody says seven is a lucky number. If we could only hide them animals somewhere."

Dirty produced a bottle, and we all had a drink.

"I've got a swell idea," says Dirty. "We'll hide them animals in the grain room, and if Yaller Horse overpowers us, they'll take away an empty cage."

"Ay tank das been goot yoke," says Olaf.

"You know how to get 'em out of the cage?"

"Sure, Ay know how."

I dunno yet how we done it, but the three of us managed to wheel that wagon around and against the door of the grain room, which is a place about fifteen feet square, built inside the stable. There's a end door to the cage, and a way of liftin' the bars in between the two cages. The door of the grain room opens in; so Dirty tied a rope to the handle. Olaf let the lion into the tiger's cage, before he opened the end door, and they shore told each other a few things in jungle talk. There's fur flyin' out through the bars of the cage when Olaf opened the end door, and both of them animals went crashin' into that train room. Dirty yanked the door shut behind 'em, and we wheeled the wagon away from the room.

I reckon them two cats stopped fightin' to examine their new quarters, 'cause everythin' is quiet again. We had another drink, and then we heard somebody fussin' with the lock on the front door. Dirty sneaked down there, but comes back in a minute, and tells us that Yaller Horse is back.

"Das goot yoke," chuckles Olaf.

"Let's git up in the loft," suggests Dirty, which was a good idea.

Yaller Horse would never look up there, and none of us were capable of stoppin' 'em from taking the rest of the outfit. It was quite a job to get Olaf into the loft, 'cause he wasn't in no climbin' mood, but we got him there.

At the street end of the loft is a hay hole, about five feet square, where the moonlight shines through. We're above the level of the hills, and all we can see is a lot of stars. We crawls toward that hay hole, and we're only about fifteen feet from it when Dirty grabs me by the arm and I came down on my chin.

"My Gawd!" wails Dirty. "There's a stairway up from the grain room, and we never locked it!"

Right in the middle of that hay hole stands Judas, the man eatin' lion, with the moonlight makin' a light streak all around him.

"Where de hal iss dat hole we come oop?" wails Olaf, tryin' to back up.

"You—you know lions, Olaf," whispers Dirty. "Say somethin' to him, can'tcha?"

"Hay don't unnerstand," complains Olaf. "Ay vant to git out from dis place."

Judas turns his head and looks at us.

Wham! The report of Dirty's six-shooter almost blew my hat off. I dunno where that bullet hit Judas, but he let out a squawl you could hear for a mile, and he went back past so fast that he missed the stairway door to the grain room, and hit the wall.

I got to my feet and headed for the hay hole as fast as I could run, and Dirty Shirt was right behind me. We never stopped to see what was below, but sailed out of there like a couple of birds. It's fifteen feet to the ground, as the crow flies, but I reckon Ike Harper made a runnin' broad jump record, 'cause I came down flat on my back in a waterin' trough full of cold water.

It knocked all the wind out of me, and the vacancy was immediate and soon filled with water. I reckon I was goin' down for the third time, when somebody pulled me out.

Everythin' was kinda confused for a while. Instead of rollin' me over a barrel, they seemed to be rollin' me up in a rope. I coughed out about a gallon of water and hay seed mixed, and then begins to find out that things ain't so cozy after all. I've been all roped up by Yaller Horse, it seems. Dirty Shirt lit so hard that he's recitin' the Lord's Prayer in Chinook. They only had one rope, as far as I can understand, and I'm tied up with one end, while Dirty is tied up with the other. There's about fifteen feet of slack between us.

"Well, we've got the ones we needed," says Yuma. "It's a cinch now."

"We can git in the back door," says Tombstone. "C'mon."

"What'll we do with these two snake hunters?" asks Smoky Potts.

"Better gag 'em," suggests Hardpan; and that's what they done.

"Lock 'em in the grain room," says Tombstone. "Somebody'll find 'em in the mornin'."

I TRIED to yell, but it wasn't any use. I wanted to tell 'em that the grain room was full of wild animals, but all I could do was glub a little. I knowed darn' well nobody would find us in the mornin', unless they performed an attopsy on a lion and a tiger. My gun was gone, my hands tied and my voice cut off just behind my tonsils.

Dirty was makin' a lot of funny noises, but nobody paid any attention to him. They shoved us around to the back door, which they had opened. The lantern was still lighted. Smoky comes in, leadin' several of them circus horses.

"Better unhook that front door," says Tombstone. "It locks from this side. We want to be all set to git out of here. P'session is nine points in the law, and we p'sesses right now. Git them harnesses on and let's git goin'."

We hears one of 'em slidin' that front door open kinda easy-like.

"Unfasten that grain room door," says Yuma, "and let's git these two jiggers off our hands. No use of me holdin' 'em, when there's more important work to be done."

I look at Dirty in the lantern light. His hair is standin' up on end, and his one loose eye is doin' a war dance. He's tryin' to tell 'em why we don't want to go in that grain room, and it sounds like a hawg diggin' for roots.

"Oof gloogl oof oof glug mff glug oogle," says he.

"Shut up, you damn' Eskimo!" snorts Tombstone. "Open the door, Yuma, and I'll see how far inside I can kick these two Piperockers."

And he kicked me so far inside that my vertebrae knocked a chunk off my solar plexus. Me and Dirty landed on our hands and knees jist inside the door, when a cross between a yaller streak and a locomotive went between us. That is, he went between us as far as the rope would let him, and then he took up the slack. I went upward and backward and my spinal column rattled like a handful of poker chips when my back hit the wall beside the door.

It's my opinion that the rope broke, but I won't swear to anythin', except that I bounced off that wall and landed with my nose against the side of the big grain bin. I see a lot of stars that ain't never been seen by any telescope, but I didn't lose my presence of mind. Somethin' seemed to be sayin', "Ike Harper, esquire, don't forget that even with the lion out there somewhere, eatin' up Yaller Horse and Piperock, you are still among the tiger; and while the lion is the king of beasts, the tiger is the minister of war."

And that still, small voice made me forget my sore nose and unjointed vertebrae. But the Harper fambly are fighters from the belt both ways. The door is shut, but I can hear sounds of conflict

outside. The rope comes loose from my hands, and I gathers m' muscles—what's left to gather—and gits ready for anythin'.

It's awful dark in there, and I've lost all track of direction, but m' ears are tuned plenty. Then I hears that tiger—Jessie James. He's goin' soft, kinda sniffin', sniffin' along. I've fought all kinds of things in one way or another, but I don't *sabe* the proper attack on tigers; so this is kinda new to me, and jist about the time I'm tryin' to figure out a plan of battle, as they say, Jessie James rubs agin me.

As I said before, I'm plumb lackin' in feelin's, but the fightin' instinct is strong within me, and I took to that tiger like he was m' long lost brother. Did we have conflict? Ask the man who has took to a tiger. There wasn't no furniture in that grain room to hamper us—jist four walls and some big grain bins—plenty room to show the superiority of the white race agin' the striped.

We went around and around that place in the dark, kickin', bitin', scratchin', bumpin' into the walls. Sometimes the tiger is on top, and agin Ike Harper rises above all obstacles and whangs that man eater from above. We're both active, as you might say, but I hit m' head on the wall a few times, and I've got inside information that unless the tiger has had about enough, the fight is goin' agin the white race. And about that time I gits my hand on what feels like a loaded quirt, and the next time I gits on top, I socks Mr. Tiger over the head with all my remainin' strength. It was plenty. The tiger sighs kinda deep, relaxes, and Ike Harper rolls off on his back, weak but triumphant. Barrin' that one wallop with the quirt, I've whipped a man eater with m' bare hands. I'm takin' a lot of deep breaths and wonderin' how much of this is goin' to be believed, when I hears a weak voice sayin'—

"Ay don't like dis haar t'ing."

"Olaf, is that you?" I asks

"Ay am de calli-yupe player," says he. "My name is Yergens, from Copenhagen."

"C'mon down, Olaf. Everythin' is all right—I've whipped the tiger."

"Ay am down."

With a hand that feels like it belonged to somebody else, I finds a match and managed to scratch it on the floor. Beside me lays Olaf Jergens, minus most of his clothes, both eyes blacked and a long scratch across his nose. We stare at each other until the match goes out.

"Where's the tiger?" I asks.

"Ay don't know," says Olaf painful-like, "Ay have whip heem, Ay t'ink. Yeeminy gosh, we have fight!"

"And you let him git away from you?"

"Ay t'ink de ruff fall in on me."

I tried the door, but it was locked. Olaf wasn't very steady, but he followed me up the stairs to the loft. I've lost all fear of that tiger, but my legs don't track good; so I gets down on my hands and knees and starts crawlin' toward that hay hole agin, with Olaf crawlin' behind me. He don't know what it's all about, but he's too dumb to ask questions.

We reached the hay hole, when I happens to turn my head, and there's the two shiny eyes of that tiger behind us. He must have been hidin' in the loft. I sat up with my back toward the hay pole. I wanted to save my life as much as ever, but I didn't want to take that fifteen foot jump agin. Mebbe the tiger had an idea that we had him cornered.

Jist then the floor seems to kinda raise under me, and the stable begins to shake.

"Yo-o-o-o-o-owr-r-r-r-rr!" yowls Jessie James, and he came between me and Olaf Jergens like an arrer from a bow.

I MADE one grab with both hands, got me a flyin' tackle on some part of that tiger, and went out through that hay hole with such a jerk that I yanked my backbone into place agin. I let loose in midair and landed with a splat right on the broad back of that elephant, which is half-way through the door of the livery stable and don't seem to be able to go either way. That was what was givin' us an earthquake feelin' up there.

There's horses and people runnin' every way, yellin', givin' advice.

"Shoot him!" yells Pete Gonyer. "Shoot him."

I reckon they meant me, 'cause the first bullet nicked a chunk off the bridge of my nose. The elephant is surgin' and gruntin', and the old stable is loosenin' in all her joints. And then there comes another sound. The only thing I ever heard make a noise like that was the old automobile Tombstone Todd won at the Piperock raffle. It had a horn on it that sounded like the wail of a lost soul. Yaller Rock County forbid Tombstone from runnin' it, and he stored it in a blacksmith shop in Paradise.

Nearer and nearer she comes, wailin' plenty. Even the elephant stops his house wreckin' and tries to pull loose. And then we see it in the moonlight, and it's an automobile, runnin' like a comet, with fire shootin' out the rear end. It hit a little culvert at the end of the street, about a hundred feet from the stable, whirled around on one wheel, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the danged thing hit the elephant square in the rear end.

The front end was jist high enough to knock the elephant loose from his hind legs, and he came backwards with the whole front of the livery stable, and we all crashed down in a shudderin' heap. My light went out then. It had been flickerin' badly, anyway.

When I woke up, I'm settin' in a chair in Buck's saloon. There's Yuma Yates, Hardpan Hawkins and Smoky Potts. All three of 'em look like the climax of a nightmare. It seems as though all of Piperock is there. Propped up in a chair is a stranger. He's wearin' what's left of a checked suit, a white collar sticks straight up the back of his neck, and around his neck is the brim of a derby hat. Both of his eyes are black and his nose looks like a peeled beet.

"Here's another one," says Magpie.

Runnin' Wolf comes in through the doorway, and he's shore a downtrodden lookin' aborigine. He's been hit so hard that he's more bow-legged than ever, and all he's wearin' is about half of a boiled shirt and a twisted eagle feather.

"Set down," orders Magpie. Runnin' Wolf tries to, but he can't bend.

"What happened?" asks the stranger, plenty hoarse. "I don't remember much. I was in that town they call Paradise and I wanted to come up here. That Indian had an automobile and offered to take me up here with him. We missed the road and knocked down a lot of little trees, I think, and some of them must have hit me in the head."

"The Injun was drivin' it, eh?"

"I drive," nodded Runnin' Wolf. "Go like hell."

"Where did you git that horseless carriage?" asks Magpie.

"Tombstone traded it to him for the circus," groans Yuma.

"Traded for what circus?" asks the stranger.

"Oh, the one an Injun brought in here."

"Traded? Say, that outfit belongs to me! I rented it to that Injun. He wanted to put on style, and I needed the money. Where are my animals?"

I've been listenin' to all this, but my eyes have been on the back door, where Dirty Shirt is standin' with his back toward us, pullin' on a rope which extends around the corner. He turns his head and says:

"I dunno where the rest of your damn' mee-nagerie is, mister—but I've got the lion. Gimme a hand, will you?"

"You—you got the lion on that rope?" yelps Magpie.

"Yea-a-a-ah—and he's balkin' on me. Gimme a hand, will you?"

In less than three seconds there's only me and Dirty Shirt left in the place. I managed to git to my feet and go wobblin' down to Dirty, who is bracin' his feet, pullin' awful hard. I slips out my knife and cut the rope, and Dirty went over backwards against the wall.

I helped Dirty to his feet and we went wobblin' down to the front door. He thought the rope broke. We went outside,

hangin' on to each other, and almost run into Tombstone Todd. He's got a rope tangled around his neck and one arm, and he ain't got enough clothes on to build a handkerchief.

"Wh-where's the lul-lion go?" he asks.

We didn't know.

"It dragged me all over the damn' town," he wails. "Tried to drag me into the saloon, but the rope busted. I'm through. I traded Runnin' Wolf my horseless carriage for his damn' circus, but I take my loss cheerfully."

An apparition limps in out of the dark. It is Olaf.

"Ay am de calli-yupe player," says he. "My name is Yergens, from Copenhagen."

"Did you know Chief Axlegrease only rented that circus outfit?" I asks.

"He tal me, 'You say Ay buy dis outfit, and Ay pay you ten doolar.' Ay don't get no pay. Ay am what you call socker."

"And," sighs Dirty Shirt, "when Barnum said that he didn't jist mean that they had to be born thataway. Lotsa grown folks git that way. I lose ten dollars, too."

"I'll make that damn' Injun give me back my gas buggy," groans Tombstone.

"If I'm any judge," says I, "you'll have to take it out of the elephant's hide."

Next mornin' they found the lion and tiger sleepin' together in their cage, and the elephant eatin' up all of Pete Gonyer's haystack; so the owner paid Pete for his loss and took 'em away. I was glad to see 'em leavin'. I've always been a great lover of animals—but I owned a lion onct. His name was Judas.

OOM PAUL'S GOLD

By E. VAN LIER RIBBINK

THE TALL Boer tapped his forehead. Then he pointed the stem of his pipe at the withered frame of the old Hottentot.

"That *vaalpens*—yellow belly—is completely crazy. Too much Cape brandy, and a *dagga* smoker into the bargain. Cape *dop* by itself is guaranteed to give a white man the horrors, but those yellow bellies combine the weed of the *veldt* with the fiery *dop*. Put the two together, and you have a nice little sum in inebriation. No wonder this Hottentot has been spinning the fanciest yarn I ever listened to! As for myself, I'll stick to the one kind of poison."

As if to emphasize the comparative safety of the white man's liquor, Van der Merwe reached out and drained his tumbler of whisky-soda to the bottom.

"Fine," he sighed, blowing a blue cloud from the Magaliesberg in his big bowled pipe.

A Novelette of an exciting Treasure Hunt in the Heart of Zululand

The small, thickset Van Wyk, his fellow transport rider, hunter and adventurer, turned angrily on the Hottentot, who stood waiting patiently in the yard beyond the club veranda.

"*Voetsak*," he commanded. "And don't hang around this place any more, or you'll land in the *tronk*."

Wearily, the little old fellow started to stumble from the grounds.

"*Wach-een-beetjel*"

The command to wait came from the third man of the little group taking its ease on the veranda of the Pretoria Club. Though he spoke in the Taal, he had a decided accent, and was certainly not a Boer, like his companions. The old Hottentot hesitated, then turned hopefully to Cliff Hastings, American. No further objection was made by the Boers, though they looked at one another in comical resignation.

For a while the American scrutinized the old Hottentot carefully, then turned to his companions.

"The chap is as sober as we are," he announced. "Look at his eyes—clear as daylight. He may have been smoking *dagga*, but it has not affected his mind. You know these ancient natives can stand the stuff remarkably well. It is only the younger fellows who do not know how to handle the weed, that get drunk on it. Am I right?" He addressed the Hottentot.

The little brown man nodded vigorously.

"*Ja*, my baas, *ek rook dagga*, but I am not drunk. And what I have just told you is the gospel truth—I would swear it to the missionary."

"I believe you." This with a sidelong glance at the two Boers. But those phlegmatic gentlemen sat quietly in their canvas chairs, presenting their best poker faces.

Cliff resumed his interrogation of the Hottentot.

"You have been telling us of a great treasure hidden somewhere on the coast of East Africa. Do you mean Mozambique?"

The Hottentot did not answer; evidently he had been discouraged by the derision and unbelief of the two Boers. He merely nodded.

"All right. You want our help and, therefore, you have told us your story?"

Again the Hottentot inclined his head.

"The master speaks the truth," he answered.

"How is it that we never heard of this strange tribe? And where does the gold

come from?" The American put the two questions in rapid succession.

The Hottentot came closer. Gone was the dispirited and listless air of the man who had a story to tell that no one would believe. His eyes glowed, and his voice sank to a whisper.

"The gold is part of the treasure which the great president, Oom Paul, shipped to Europe when the English entered Pretoria," he whispered. "But it never got there. The vessel was wrecked on the East Coast, and those aboard were killed by the warriors of the tribe of which I spoke."

"*Allemachtig!*" Van der Merwe, the tall Boer, was at last impressed. "What do you know about Kruger's gold, you brown baboon?"

The American motioned him to be silent.

"Ah, there seems to be something to that Hottentot's story after all," he shot at the Boer. "Well, Van, patience is a virtue, you know. Just leave me to question this chap, and you will hear all about it — and don't you call him a baboon."

Van der Merwe shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, yes, there's something to that part of the story. Sure, the old president did ship a lot of gold to Europe, after the tide of war had turned against the Boers. The first shipment reached its destination, but the second consignment was lost. I happen to know all about that, too.

"It was like this. The English were advancing, so we decided to evacuate Jo'burg and the Rand, but first we secured a lot of gold from the Rand mines, as well as from the state mint. As you know, these mines produce over half the total gold output of the world, so you can imagine that it was a substantial treasure. The gold was sent to Pretoria on ox wagons, and yours truly happened to be one of the burghers of the mounted commando that accompanied the wagons. We got the stuff to Pretoria without difficulty, and then loaded those bars of pure, unminted gold on a special train, bound for Delagoa Bay, Portuguese East Africa. Oom Paul meant to ship it to Europe and use it to buy arms and munitions for our Boer commandos. Well, we just got the stuff out in the nick of time, for the British shells were already falling on Klapperkop, and the other forts guarding the approach to Pretoria. As it was, we fought a hot rear guard action with the English lancers who were entering the town from the south.

"THERE was more trouble when the gold arrived at Delagoa, for the Portuguese were scared of the British, and spoke of impounding the gold as contraband of war. But at last they decided not to interfere, and the bullion was loaded on a Dutch steamer. The ship left port in a hurry and steamed north along the coast of East Africa. Then something went wrong. Probably enemy agents had a hand in the business, for on a fine, starlit night the vessel was blown up somewhere north of Beira. She was beached in shallow water, hardly a mile off the coast. Since that time there have been a couple of poorly organized attempts to locate the treasure. That's all I know about it. As to that Hottentot's tale about a savage tribe locating the treasure and moving it into the interior—that's just a fantastic nigger yarn, in my opinion."

The Boer knocked the ashes from his pipe and, leaning back in his chair, glowered at the Hottentot until the man shrank behind the broad back of the young American.

"Just a minute," Cliff said. "Strange as it may seem, Van, I am inclined to believe the story—in part, at least. But let him tell how he got wind of the treasure he is talking about."

The Hottentot seemed abashed no longer.

"Sure, baas, I will tell you all about it. A little over a year ago I was employed in Durban by a baas. His name was Dirks, and he had been one of the officers of the steamer on which the gold was loaded,

and which sank off the Mozambique coast. He was the only man that was saved, and he believed that it would not be hard to salvage the gold. So he went to Europe, got some money together and, after several years, again came down to Delagoa. There he chartered a little old steamer in the run from Dar-Es-Salaam and Mombasa. He hired a few men, including myself, and we steamed up the coast to a spot north of Beira. There, at the mouth of a big river, we stopped, and Baas Dirks put on a diving suit. Every day he went down into the sea looking for the wreck and at last found it. I remember how he came to the surface one day, a bar of gold in his hands.

"We all shouted like crazy people and that night we did not sleep, but worked as we never worked before. When morning came, Baas Dirks had brought up at least twenty bars of gold, and we were all dog tired, so fell asleep on the deck. We were still asleep when the warriors of that wild tribe of which I have spoken appeared suddenly in their boats. They assagaid Baas Dirks and all the white men, but took me and a Xosa boy ashore as slaves."

Here Van der Merwe interrupted.

"What did these men look like?" It was evident that, much against his own will, the cynical Boer was beginning to believe the Hottentot's story.

"Baas, they looked like the Ama-Zulu. Also they spoke a language very much like Zulu, and I could understand them easily."

"And how did you escape?" the American asked curiously.

"My chance came, Baas, when they pushed me into a boat, for their country lies several days' rowing up the river. The Xosa and I heard them say how they were going to make us row the boats back, and then kill us. We rowed all that day, landing, in the evening, to camp for the night. As we pulled the boats up on the bank, I saw my chance and ran into the thick bush. That Xosa man tried to follow, but he was caught and, looking back over my shoulder, I saw them stick their assagais into him. That made me run faster. Therefore, Baas, I am the only man who knows where to look for the gold of the old president."

The Hottentot stopped, and stood twirling his ancient felt hat between his hands.

"And how about the woman that rules the tribe?" Cliff asked. "You said something about a lady chieftain. Surely she did not come down to the sea with the men that killed Dirks and his outfit?"

"Baas, I heard them speak of her when they were loading the gold in their boats. They seemed to think that this woman would reward them for bringing her the treasure. The older men said they expected a present of cattle, and some of the young men said that now, perhaps, they would be allowed to pick out wives for themselves."

"Curious," the American muttered. "Sounds like some offshoot of the Zulus. Old Chaka himself was the first Zulu king to pass that law forbidding the young bucks to marry until they had distinguished themselves in war."

He turned to his companions.

"What do you fellows think of it?"

"Well," drawled Van Wyk, lazily stretching his knotty arms, "I will believe at least half of his story. That's a good, safe rule in this country, young fellow—always believe half what a 'Hot-not' tells you. However, if those *skepsels* he talks of have put their black paws on the gold, then I don't see how it's any use for us to go after it."

The Hottentot raised his hand. Evidently he had something to say.

"Fire away," said Cliff, nodding encouragingly.

"Baas, the gold those people carried away is only a small part of the treasure. Baas Dirks said there were still hundreds of bars under the water. He would have got all of it, if those men had not come. All we have to do is to hire a small boat, take a diving outfit along, and sail up the East Coast to the spot which I shall show you. Then we must watch for those Zulus, but it is not likely that they will

come again, for it is far from their country to the sea, and they can not make that trek often. But you must take along plenty of rifles to beat off an attack; and that we could easily do, for I did not see a single gun among those warriors."

"How did you find your way back after you escaped," Cliff asked.

"That was a hard trek, Baas. First I went through deep jungle. I had no arms, not even a knife, and was afraid of the wild animals, and slept in the trees. I was very hungry but at last reached the seashore, where I ate clams. Then I got into Portuguese country, and met a safari. I worked south to Delagoa Bay, and got a job on a boat to Port Elizabeth. I told several white men in the *Kaap Kolonie* that I knew where to look for the old president's gold, but they laughed and called me crazy."

The three whites looked at each other. The Hottentot had told his story, and it rang true.

The American rose briskly.

"Well, my man, I believe your story. Go out in the yard and wait while we talk this thing over."

Cliff watched the Hottentot shamble away, then turned to his companions.

"'Romance is dead, the caveman said'," he quoted and slapped Van der Merwe on the back. "Come, Van, are you game? And you, Van Wyk? We've done pretty well out of that old shaft we opened up in Rhodesia. What do you say? Suppose we take our profits and fit out an expedition? Why, fellows, of course there's something to that story! The chap's quite sane and sober, and he could have no earthly object in taking us on a wild goose chase. Let's go!"

They discussed the matter over a whisky-soda. The upshot was the engagement of old Hendrik, the Hottentot, with orders to report within forty-eight hours at the Pretoria railroad station for the Lourenço Marques train.

Needless to say, the old man was delighted at the surprising change in the white men.

THE PRINCIPAL port of Portuguese East Africa was sizzling in the heat of a sultry January day when they arrived. With the exception of some white helmeted Portuguese officials who sat sipping a heady native port wine in the kiosks of the public square, the narrow streets were deserted. Followed a brief *indaba* at the whitewashed hotel, at which it was decided that Van Wyk, who spoke every Bantu dialect, would visit the Kaffir *stad* to hire a couple of native servants. In the meantime Cliff and Van der Merwe would proceed to the waterfront in the hope of finding a vessel that might be chartered.

When they met again that night, Van Wyk had been successful. As luck would have it, he had found two homesick but stalwart Zulus, who had drifted north from Zululand with a party of hunters and had been paid off in Delagoa. The boys had been provided with money to return to Natal, but, with true Bantu improvidence, had promptly spent it on Kaffir beer and finery purchased from a Greek dealer in secondhand garments.

Cliff and Van der Merwe, on the other hand, reported indifferent luck in their quest for a vessel. Lourenço Marques, they had discovered, had little shipping and hardly any tonnage of its own. That evening, after dinner, on the mosquito haunted hotel veranda, the American and his Boer companions discussed the matter at length. It would never do, they agreed, to call on the inquisitive Portuguese colonial authorities for help. If they could not charter a small vessel and crew they needed in Delagoa Bay, it would mean a trip south to Durban, where suitable tonnage could probably be had. Yet this would mean loss of time as well as money.

As they discussed the matter, a heavy-set, middle aged man, in a white drill suit and pith helmet, entered the veranda, and made himself comfortable in one of the canvas steamer chairs. Van Wyk stared at the stranger, then laughed loudly.

"As I live, it's Koning Dop," he ex-

claimed and, jumping to his feet, hurried over with outstretched hand.

Van der Merwe looked at the young American.

"Know who that is?" he asked.

"No, I don't. How should I? I never was in Delagoa before."

The Boer grinned and winked.

"That fellow is one of the characters of South Africa," he explained. "They call him Koning—King Dop for several reasons—all of them good! This fellow Dop is one of the pioneers of the East Coast. He came here from Holland when Delagoa Bay was nothing but a swamp, and bought the tidelands along the Bay for a mere song. Then, when Kruger got the *Nederlandsche Zuid Afrikaansche Spoorweg Maatschappy* — some name that for a railroad company—to build the line between Pretoria and Delagoa, this chap sold the tidelands for a fabulous sum for harbor development. In many other ways, too, did he prosper. He became such a power among the handful of white men of the coast that some wag gave him the name of King Dop. The title stuck, and gained even greater significance when King Dop went Kaffir. Know what that means? Well, simply this: Dop, in his lonesome grandeur, and in the absence of ladies of his own race, built himself a regular seraglio in the grounds of his estate. This, like any Bantu chieftain, he filled with dusky belles—the flower of all the races of the sub-continent: Xosa women, Swahili girls and what have you? He bought them at regular market prices—ten or twelve oxen for a Xosa girl, and so on.

"Of course, those were the days when everything went on the coast; and, for that matter, it is yet a free and easy country. The Portuguese authorities, among whom the King had many friends, did not lead such blameless lives themselves and had no objections. Moreover, Dop was a good husband to his many wives. No Turkish lady of the harem ever led a more luxurious life, or one more free of care. What's more, the King took splendid care of his many halfbreed sons and daughters. All received an education, and the eldest boy was sent to Holland to study at Leyden. When the young fellow returned to Delagoa, his father sent him to the Transvaal with a sack of money, hoping he would make friends in Pretoria among the young Boers. But you know what we think of the tar brush! Young Dop made no friends and returned to his dad's seraglio, sadder and wiser. That, in brief, is the story of the man. He is an indomitable character. A Brigham Young of Africa! But I see Van Wyk is bringing him over, so you are going to meet him in person."

"Meet my friend, Dop," said Van Wyk, speaking in Dutch. "You have met Van der Merwe years ago. This is my friend, Cliff Hastings, all the way from the U. S. A."

King Dop urbanely acknowledged the introduction, and was pleased to join the party in a *kaapse brandewyn*. It was not often these days, he said, that he had the pleasure of meeting friends from *die hoge veldt*. He lifted his glass, and wished them *gezondheid*.

Van Wyk came to the point in his direct manner.

"Meeting you is almost providential," he told Dop.

King Dop leered.

"Thank you," he said, "for the compliment. I have been told that I resembled many things in my time, but this is the first occasion on which I have been compared to Providence."

VAN WYK smiled painfully. Your back veldt Boer does not joke on such matters. Levity on any subject connected with religion always flicks him on the raw. In fact, a lack of reverence is one of the things which he charges against his overseas cousin, the Hollander.

"I said meeting you was providential," Van Wyk repeated, "because I believe you can help us. We are in a bad jam. We must have a small boat, never mind what for. We have looked all over Delagoa Bay, but no luck. You know this

coast like a book, so maybe you can help."

Dop threw back his head and laughed.

"You fellows want a boat. *Allemachtig*, dat is good! Now what on earth can a couple of landlubbing, big game shooting Boers like you, and that young Yankee, want a boat for. What's more, you couldn't navigate her if you had one."

Van Wyk reddened. The stocky little fellow had a terrific temper and was finding it hard to control himself under King Dop's ridicule.

"Never mind what we want the boat for," he retorted sharply. "That's our own business. And we do not plan to navigate it ourselves. We don't need a big vessel, and we want to charter any launch you may know of and pay her old skipper a good price. Now you seem to be getting a lot of amusement out of this, and you are welcome to your bit of fun. But what I want to know is, will you, or will you not, assist us in getting a boat? If not, say so and be damned."

Dop again roared with laughter.

"The same old Van Wyk," he cackled. "*Verdomd!* I like your spirit. You know, I get sick of dealing with Portogreeks all the time. They have no spirit. Oh, yes, they get mad all right, but they never show it. You cuss them, and they get pale and draw themselves up. That's when you have to watch out—at night walking home alone! Not so long ago a young clerk of the Oost Afrika Handels Huis was poking fun in one of the kiosks at the Portogreeks. His main complaint was that every other day in Delagoa was a saint's day and public holiday and that he could not do any business that way. A couple of the Portogreeks got riled over the boy's innocent remarks, and the next day my Xosas fished him from the bay, with a knife through his throat."

"Oh, shut your mouth," Van Wyk growled. "Who wants to hear your bloody reminiscences? For the last time, are you or are you not going to tell us where we can get a boat?"

"All right, boy! I'll help you out," wheezed Dop. "Furthermore, I don't give a damn what you want the boat for! As luck will have it, there is a schooner in the Bay now that should suit your purpose. I once chartered her for a run up the coast as far as Dar-Es-Salaam, and she has recently returned from a trip to Zanzibar. Been smuggling coolies for the Natal sugar plantations, I believe. You know, the Union government no longer permits the entry of Indian coolies, so now they bring them down to Mozambique, and thence smuggle them into Natal. They tried to pass the last bunch through Zululand, but the Kehlas massacred every mother's son of them. But as to the boat—want to take a look at her? Come along. She is not very pretty, and is only manned by a skipper and a few men, but will keep afloat. Let's go—*haastig!*"

Dop was as good as his word. The schooner, which was hulled on the mud of the bay shore, it being low tide, would do. Her owner and navigator was a half-breed of Portuguese and Swahili parentage. Il Capitan Machado was ready to sell his ship, himself and his soul to the highest bidder and, which was more to the point, he proved singularly lacking in natural curiosity as to the objective of the trip. Sailing under sealed orders evidently was no novelty to this languid gentleman, nor to his Swahili crew.

They struck a bargain without much haggling. The next morning, early, all supplies, including a complete diver's outfit, a machine gun, rifles and several boxes of ammunition, were carried aboard by the Hottentot and the two Zulus. Shortly before noon the halfbreed skipper announced that they would leave port as soon as the tide swept over the mud flats.

However, at the last moment, when the schooner was turning its bow toward the open Indian Ocean, a difficulty arose. It came in the form of a small dingey, rowed by two powerful, coal black Mozambique police boys, and carrying in its stern a little, fat Portuguese port officer. Coming alongside, he climbed a rope ladder with much puffing. The two Kaffir police

secured the dingey, and followed their master on deck.

Cliff nudged Van der Merwe.

"Gosh, look at all the gold braid. That guy must be at least an admiral."

The Portuguese singled out Van der Merwe, evidently considering that the tallest man aboard was the leader of the expedition. He saluted punctiliously and asked a question in Portuguese. Seeing that the Boer did not understand, he rather peremptorily repeated his question in broken English.

"The senhor would be good enough to state the objective of this expedition. The colonial authorities of Mozambique were informed that artillery and several cases of munitions had been taken aboard. Furthermore, the party carried equipment for deep sea diving. All of which appeared highly suspicious to the colonial authorities!"

The Boer looked his disgust as he towered over the perspiring Portuguese. Plainly, he was not inclined to favor the high and mighty colonial authorities with an explanation. Instead, he deliberately spat over the side, then ejaculated the single Dutch expletive—

"*Verdomd!*"

This was love's labor lost, for the port officer did not understand. He failed to take serious offense, and tried again.

"Would the senhor name the destination of the vessel? And would he please expedite his elucidation?"

Van der Merwe at last seemed to realize that some reply was expected of him. He grunted that the schooner was sailing "somewhere north of Beira". Then impatience got the better of him.

"The object of the trip is none of the Portuguese senhor's damned business," he added forcefully.

At this the official drew himself up in affronted dignity and shrugged his shoulders. In that case, he was sorry, but he could not, nay would not, permit the schooner to leave port. Also, the colonial authorities would forthwith attach the vessel and he, the port officer, himself, aided by the majesty of the law, as represented by his two Mozambique police boys, would take charge.

To this tirade Van der Merwe did not reply in words but, turning on his heel, called his two Zulus aside, giving them certain instructions in their own language. Satembi, the bigger of the two, flashed that superior smile which the true Zulu reserves for his dealings with the lesser Bantus. For, in the Zulu heaven, there is no room for other blacks but those of Chaka's breed. And thus it happened that the two Zulus suddenly laid violent hands on the unsuspecting Kaffir policemen. Never a chance did they have to draw their heavy *kiries*. Overboard they went with a mighty splash, in all the glory of little round blue caps, set at a saucy angle on woolly heads. Their fat superior was still tugging at his sword of office, when he too was seized and thrown overboard. As the three dripping figures at last dragged themselves up on the quay, the schooner was well out into the center of the bay.

"That was not so good," the American remarked, shaking his head. "Those chaps are sure to send a gunboat after us. Suppose they pump a few shells at us from that fort up there!"

The skipper, who spoke tolerable English and who had been an interested onlooker, now spoke up.

"That old fort on the hill!" He snapped a yellow finger at it. "I laugh—ha-ha! Those Portuguese men—they dare not shoot those guns. Guns too old, fort too old. Last time they fire the guns was when their governor, he die. The gun explode and the wall, he fall out of the side of the fort! Then the gun he roll down into bay!"

"Yes, but how about a gunboat?" the American persisted. "Surely, this port boasts some sort of police vessel?"

The skipper said yes, that there was a gunboat, a little old bilgewater affair. But its engines were on the blink, and the vessel had now been laid up for several weeks. There was nothing to fear, nothing.

So it proved. They sped out of Delagoa

without any sign of pursuit whatsoever, and soon the headland sank astern.

II

THE SCHOONER proved seaworthy and roomy enough. Once out into the open, her skipper put up sail, saving gas for his auxiliary engine, and she went bowling along before a steady breeze, hugging the coastline. Thus the day wore on. The two Boers took no notice of whatever scenery the coastline offered, and spent most of their time smoking or sleeping.

Satembi and Umjala, the Zulus, produced from the depths of a blesbokskin bag a number of bones made from ox tail joints and, spreading their *karosses* on the deck, sat gambling all day. Cliff, to whom the Ama-Zulu and their customs always presented an interesting study, soon discovered that slim Zulu girls and fat longhorn cattle, were the imaginary stakes involved in the game.

The American did not tire of watching the wild coastline of East Africa, speculating on the great game country and the unknown tribes beyond. He was much intrigued when old Hendrik, the Hottentot, declared, on the evening of the third day, that they would reach the spot where the ship of gold had gone down, early the next day.

Just before dawn Skipper Machado steered the schooner under the lee of a high promontory. It was a flood tide, and the Hottentot explained that, after the tide had gone out, he would be able to locate the position of the sunken vessel by means of a sandbank near the shore. The ship, he explained, had been beached on this sandbank, but had slipped off into the deep water. At low tide, he said, it would be possible to land on the sandbank and operate from that vantage point. The bottom, he added, was a mixture of sand and shells, firm underfoot.

Machado anchored his vessel, and they watched the tide run out rapidly. Soon a yellow stretch of sand lifted above the water.

The Zulu boys set to work transporting the derrick, ropes and other attachments of the diving apparatus to the sandbank, and Cliff made haste to get into the diving outfit. Everything seemed ready for the descent when a long drawn hail came across the water, apparently from the shore. The call broke eerily on the dead silence of the tropical day.

"It must be the warriors of the tribe that captured me," old Hendrik ventured, his teeth chattering. "Quick, baas, let us go back to the ship, or we will all be killed."

Cliff, who had removed his diver's helmet to look in the direction from which the call had come, exclaimed:

"I see them, over there, to the left, at the foot of that hill. Two people and, by Jove, they are white. A man and a woman! Now what the deuce are two white people doing in this jumping-off place?"

The Boers now also made out the two figures.

"The man is waving at us," Van Wyk declared.

Here was a puzzle that demanded instant solution. The three white men tumbled into the schooner's dingey and pulled rapidly for the shore.

As they got closer, it was seen that a small tent had been pitched at the foot of the headland, between two clumps of bush, a short way from the beach. A few more strokes and they grounded easily on the sandy bottom. The man ran into the water to meet them, while the woman stood waiting on the beach.

The stranger silently shook hands. Then he burst out:

"Thank God for your arrival, men! We feared that we were stranded in this awful place for the rest of our lives. This is nothing short of a miracle." He beckoned to the woman, who now came forward. "My sister, Miss Helen Chandler," he said. "I am Edward Chandler." He spoke with the drawl of the English college man.

Cliff voiced the thought that was uppermost in his own mind and that of his companions.

"You are no more surprised to see us than we are at finding a white man and lady in this spot," he said. "How on earth did you get here?"

Chandler grinned. He was a tall, likable fellow, and showed a strong resemblance to the beautiful girl by his side.

"I suppose we were drawn by the same magnet that brought you," he drawled. "I see you brought a diving outfit along. Well, so did we! But ours is at the bottom of the bay, and so is the *dhow* that brought us, as well as our Arab captain and his crew. You seem surprised.

"Fact is, we also heard of Paul Kruger's treasure. Most everybody in South Africa knows that the gold ship was beached somewhere on the East Coast, but we, like yourselves, knew the exact location. You see, my sister and I had come out to British Central Africa for a bit of shooting. Then, at Mombasa, we met an Arab who thought he knew the exact spot where the gold was sunk.

"We had been disappointed in the hunting up Nairobi way, owing to the fact that nowadays Dick, Tom and Harry go potshotting around there. So, when we heard the story of the old president's lost treasure, we decided to go after it. A stinking Arab *dhow* was the best thing we could find in the way of a vessel. It took us a long time to make the trip from Mombasa south, but at last we got here and anchored in the bay. Being sick and tired of our cramped quarters aboard the smelly old ship, my sister and I had ourselves rowed to the beach where we set up a tent. We planned to pass the night ashore, return the next morning to the *dhow*, and start diving. That was three days ago. That night, just before sun down, as we were sitting in front of the tent, two long boats suddenly shot out from the mouth of that river yonder. We could just make out that they were jammed full of fighting men, but fortunately they did not see the two of us ashore, and pulled straight for the *dhow*.

"Those poor devils of Arabs never had a chance, although they made a desperate attempt to weigh anchor. In no time the tribesmen swarmed over the sides; then came a horrible screaming, followed by several bodies splashing into the bay. A few minutes later a cloud of smoke arose, flames burst from the old boat, and that was the last of our *dhow* and her crew.

"MY SISTER and I ran into the bush for cover, after pulling out our tent pegs, and stayed there all night. The next morning we saw the warriors land on the sandbank. From that distance they appeared very much like Zulus—the same big build, and general get-up. They loafed about on the sandbank for awhile, warming themselves in the sun. Then, at the command of one who seemed to be in charge, some twenty-five of their number—evidently younger men—suddenly began to strip.

"Then, one after another, they commenced diving from the sandbank straight into the deep water, in the exact spot where, according to the Arabs, the gold ship had gone down. The vessel must have burst wide open, for in no time one of the divers came up, carrying in both hands an object that scintillated in the rays of the sun—presumably one of the bars of gold. The others now also came to the surface, but most of them were empty handed. Then they gathered around their chief and held a prolonged talk, the upshot of which was that each of the divers again went down, this time, however, carrying one end of a long leather thong between his teeth, the other end being held by those ashore. What now followed was the strangest fishing party I ever saw. The thongs were pulled up by those ashore, and at the end of each a bar of gold was attached! I never saw such swimming and diving. Some of those Kaffirs remained under water fully three minutes at a time, and the men on the sandbank had their hands full, pulling in the treasure the divers sent up. Every minute we would see a black head appear above the surface; then the swimmers would climb up on

the sandbank and throw themselves flat to get their breath back, after which they would dive in again. You should have seen that huge, shimmering heap of treasure which had been collected on the sandbank! And, all the time, we lay hidden behind a bush, and had to look on helplessly. When we looked the next morning there was not a native in sight."

Cliff and his companions had listened to the Englishman's story with growing disappointment. They were too late by at least three days, and Oom Paul's treasure, for which they had fitted out this expensive expedition, had been lifted by a few dozen naked savages, who were adepts at diving.

"So you don't think there's any of the gold left? Those niggers took it all?" Van Wyk asked dispiritedly.

Chandler nodded.

"Undoubtedly. It's useless to send down divers. Those fellows took their time and made a clean sweep of it. Kruger's gold is gone, to the last bar. If you want it, you'll have to take it from those natives by force and, judging from what we saw of their physique, you would need an army to go after them."

The two Boers shook their heads and smoked in sulky silence. But the American jumped to his feet, his eyes sparkling.

"By heck! That's just what we shall do!" he exclaimed. "The very thing!"

Van der Merwe shot a quick glance at the young American.

"Do what?" he asked suspiciously.

"Go after those niggers, of course. Find out who and what they are, what they are doing with the gold, and get it away from them. They have taken the gold by violence, and there's no reason why we should not start a little war of our own. What do you fellows say?"

They did not say much, if anything. The Boers merely shrugged their shoulders at what they considered a crazy stunt, while the Englishman stared in open mouthed amazement.

"My word," he said, "are you serious? Do you actually suggest that we should go after those johnnies in their own country to capture the gold? It just is not done, old chap."

"Oh, yes, it is," the American rejoined optimistically. "However, I am not suggesting that we take the schooner up the river. Want to hear my plan?"

"Oh, fire away," Van der Merwe said tolerantly. "This trip is a fizzle, so we might as well be amused. Shoot!"

"All right, then. My plan is that we take the schooner's lifeboat, which will hold twelve persons. If Chandler joins us, our party will consist of seven men, including our two Zulus and the Hottentot, and we'll have space left for our supplies, guns and munitions. We will then row up that river until we reach the country of those wild and woolly tribesmen. Once there, we'll have to shape our course to fit the case. Meantime, the schooner can take Miss Chandler down to Beira, and then return here for us. What do you say?"

Van der Merwe shook his head.

"Impossible," he declared. "Why, what could our little handful do against an entire tribe? From what Chandler tells us, it seems they are some relation of the Zulus. I'm an old Kaffir fighter, sonny, and believe me, meeting a Zulu impie in full war get-up is no picnic."

The American grinned cheerfully.

"Granted, old man. The Zulu is a first class fighting man. But this particular tribe does not appear to have any firearms. Two of us have seen them in action—the old Hottentot, Hendrik, and Chandler. Neither saw any guns in the hands of those people. Am I right?"

"Yes, you are," the Englishman admitted. "They only carried assagais, but they seemed uncommonly capable in handling the messy things."

"O. K! That being the case, doesn't it strike you that a small party, armed to the teeth as we are, ought to stand a mighty good chance against a bunch of savages armed only with assagais and shields? Oh, come on, you two Dutchmen. Think of Cortez and how his handful of gun toting Spaniards conquered an empire. Let's go!"

For a moment no one answered. Then an unexpected ally came to the aid of the young American.

"I think you are absolutely right!"

Her cheeks suffused with a blush that made her piquant face lovelier than ever, Helen Chandler took part in the conversation. In her excitement she clenched two small fists as she spoke.

"I think it is a splendid plan, and that it has every chance of success. There's only one thing wrong with it—that idea of leaving me behind! Nothing doing, as you say in America; we came to Africa for adventure, and I mean to have plenty of it. I'm as good a shot as any of you, so count me in."

Cliff stared at the girl in joyful surprise. Then he looked at her brother, who merely shrugged his shoulders.

"If Helen has made up her mind, I'm drafted," he drawled lazily. "All right, let's start on your crazy trek."

Cliff turned to the two Boers.

"How about it?"

Van Wyk answered for both.

"Oh, I suppose so. If we don't get some of that gold, we are broke anyway. I should hate to return empty handed."

Van der Merwe merely nodded. It was plain that he considered it a weird and fantastic business, but would raise no further objection.

CLIFF now called the Zulus and the Hottentot and told them of the proposed trek. Satembi and Umjala listened with their usual stoicism. It seemed a small matter to them; but the ancient Hottentot quaked visibly at the idea of venturing again into a region which he characterized as "*die land van die duivels*" —the country of those devils! However, upon being offered the alternative of remaining with the vessel, the little brown fellow bucked up his courage. He would go.

Captain Machado readily agreed to cruise with his schooner near the river until the expedition returned, and immediately busied himself getting the lifeboat ready. As much of the canned goods, munitions, rifles and other supplies as the boat would hold, were loaded, and it was decided to enter the river just before dawn, the hour being chosen to escape observation in case any hostile scouts were about. However, there was little fear of this, considering that the tribesmen had removed all the gold and were, apparently, not in the habit of frequently visiting the coast. Still, mindful of the disastrous results of two previous expeditions, the schooner stood offshore during the night.

Early in the morning she again approached the land, close to where the river rolled over a low sandbank into the expanse of the Indian Ocean. The whites and their three native followers took their places in the lifeboat, and rowed rapidly toward the river opening. Four men, it was agreed, would take turns at the oars.

It was still dark when they crossed the bar, receiving only a slight wetting in the low breakers. They were well up the river, past a bend that hid the sea from view, when the sun rose.

"Some creek, this," Cliff said conversationally, addressing Helen Chandler, who was seated next to him.

He pointed at the broad stream and the dense, jungle grown banks. The two Boers, accustomed to the shallower streams of the sub-continent farther south, grunted their wonder. Somehow the surrounding country and the river, with its rank vegetation, which in many places drifted away from the banks, forming as many floating islands, gave an impression of being marshy and malarial. Swarms of mosquitoes danced in the uncertain light and, when the boat approached the shore at a sharp turn of the river, a long, low body detached itself from the bank and slid into the water with a slight splash.

"Crocodile." Van der Merwe pointed with his pipe. "And a big fellow too. Look, there he is, climbing ashore again."

They were close to the crocodile, which seemed evilly disposed to the invaders, for it swung its awful head, jaws agape,

and its unwieldy body lifted on absurd, tripod-like legs.

"A fighting *kaaiman*," Van Wyk commented, "and a good mark! Fancy not being able to take a shot at him in that position. But we can not afford the noise—so goodby, old-timer."

The heat had now become intense, for the many turns of the river and the dense foliage completely shut out any breeze from the ocean. The men took off whatever superfluous clothing they could afford, and Helen Chandler donned a white *kapje*, as worn by the Boer women to shield their faces from the sun. Taking a towel, she dipped it in the stream and passed it around to the perspiring oarsmen. Upon the towel being returned to her, she again dipped it in the stream, allowing the cloth to trail idly from the stern of the boat.

"Look out, miss!" the Hottentot suddenly shrilled.

The girl glanced up in surprise, and in the same instant Cliff's arm shot out and swung her over to the center of the boat. Something struck the boat a glancing blow, and Van Wyk stood up, beating the water with his heavy oar.

"*Skiet!* Shoot!" he shouted.

There, tearing savagely at the shreds of the towel the girl had been trailing in the water, was an immense crocodile. But for Cliff's quick intervention the fearsome jaws would have snapped over the girl's arm.

A shot, fired by Van der Merwe at two yards, entered the crocodile's left eye and crashed into its brain. Satembi evidently knew just what to expect, for with a mighty pull of the oars he swung the boat around, clear from the great spiked tail that threshed the water. Then the long tail straightened out, and the dying crocodile, turning over slowly, drifted downstream, belly up.

The sight proved too much for Satembi. Seizing one of his short *gooi assagais*, the Zulu threw it with all his might. There it stood, its sharp point quivering in the rubber-like flesh under the spiked hide.

"Stop!" Van der Merwe shouted, as the second Zulu also poised an assagai. "The *kaaiman* is dead. And you, young lady, be more careful, please. That business nearly cost you an arm, and it might have upset the boat. Now let's row ashore and rest in the shade. It's about noon, and there is no use wearing ourselves out in this heat."

THEY found a shady spot ashore, but had hardly seated themselves when there came a splash, followed by a cry from Hendrik. The old Hottentot was literally dancing with excitement.

"*Kyk, baas, daar, daar!* Look, there!" he yelled, pointing a shrivelled yellow hand.

There, swimming as unconcernedly as if the river did not harbor a single hippo or crocodile, was Satembi. His blesbok-skin *kaross* and *moocha* were lying on the bank, but between his strong teeth was clenched a hunting knife.

"What is the creature doing? Is he crazy?" Van Wyk demanded of Umjala, the other Zulu, who stood looking on with a detached air, evidently not a bit worried over the outcome.

"No, *inkoos*, Satembi is not *mal*," Umjala explained. "He is swimming to the *kaaiman* to recover his assagai."

Swimming strongly, the Zulu had now reached the dead crocodile. Drawing himself up across the carcass, he gripped the assagai, gave it a powerful twist and swam back to the shore as leisurely as he had gone. The white men watched breathlessly, fearing to see him pulled below the surface, but in another minute the Zulu waded ashore, none the worse for his foolhardy feat. In a few words Van der Merwe sternly forbade him ever to repeat the performance. Turning to his companions, the Boer said:

"The Zulus are the only Bantu that do not fear crocodiles. I have seen them dive in the Komatie, short assagais in hand, and deliberately seek out the crocs. But we can not afford to lose any of our men that way."

The excitement over, the whites seated

themselves under a large *intombe*, the spreading branches of which afforded a welcome shade. Hendrik made a huge pot of coffee at the request of the two Boers, who declared that, come what might, they must have their *koffie*.

Satembi and Umjala squatted on their *karosses* a few paces from the whites. They made no effort to help the Hottentot in preparing the meal, for such work the Ama-Zulu consider only fit for women, Shangaans, Basutos and the lesser tribes. Thus the perspiring Hendrik lugged a big sack filled with Boer *beskuit* from the boat, without Satembi or Umjala raising a hand to help him. After eating, the party reembarked downriver.

If anything the day was now even more sultry than in the forenoon. All the bushveldt seemed taking a siesta, including the crocodiles which lazily sunned themselves on occasional sandbanks. As the repulsive animals watched the boat with an unwinking stare from their snake-like eyes, they appeared unafraid of its human cargo—a sign that they had hardly ever been disturbed, Van der Merwe declared. Only once, when the boat approached quite close to one of the sandbanks, did the *kaaiman* in possession deem discretion the better part of valor. The utter silence with which the huge animal slid from the bank into the water, sinking from view with hardly a splash, was uncanny. Rifles were out to shoot, in case it should follow the example of its predecessor and attack the boat, but nothing happened.

But the afternoon was not to pass thus peacefully. As the boat emerged into the open from a narrow channel between two densely grown islands, a great commotion was observed some half a mile ahead, where the river widened considerably. Bellowing and thrashing about in the water were several huge bodies.

Satembi stood up in the prow of the boat, shading his eyes with his hand. As yet the whites could make out nothing, but the Zulu with his extraordinarily sharp eyesight, declared that a great fight was in progress. Presently he burst into the characteristic Zulu *bonga*, or flowery speech and praise.

"Ha, the great one, the mighty one, the tawny cow of the deep *manzi* gives battle to the lean one, the hungry one, the foul one, that dwells on the rocky ledges beneath the river!" he chanted.

Van der Merwe, who understood Zulu and Zulus better than the others, said to his companions—

"A hippo cow defending her calf from crocodiles."

This proved to be the case. The hippo cow—a huge, glistening, red brown thing, almost as well protected by her immense layers of fat as the crocodile by its spiked armor—had already accounted for one of the crocodiles, which was seen floating away, literally bitten through and through by the immense jaws of the hippo. She was now turning her attention to the second crocodile which had maneuvered behind her back to attack the calf.

The baby hippo—small only in relation to the size of its mother—was giving a good account of itself, but already the crocodile had torn a large layer of fat from its body. The saurian was on the point of rushing in again, to sink its jaws farther into the body of the calf, when, with a terrific roar, the cow intercepted it. For a while the spectators saw nothing but water churned into foam, and then the great, pig-like head of the cow hippo broke the surface. Between her powerful jaws she held the squirming body of her enemy, its flat head sticking out on one side, the lashing tail on the other. For a moment the hippo cow held the crocodile aloft, then submerged again. Once more she rose to the surface, as if in search of another enemy, and this time she spotted the boat. Van der Merwe shouted a command; a powerful pull on the oars; a volley in the direction of the charging monster; and the boat gained the protection of a shallow sandbank. Presently, not ten yards away, the hippo showed its head, then disappeared. After a few minutes of anxious waiting, the cow was seen to come to the surface on the other side of the river, joining her calf.

"I CALL this a hell of a river!" commented Cliff. "What with crocodiles and hippos, we are having a fine old time of it, not to mention the prospects of an attack by those mysterious tribesmen, if we ever set foot on shore again!"

"Jolly glad I saw that battle," Chandler remarked, rubbing his hands. "I had heard that crocodiles sometimes attack hippo calves, though as a rule I believe that the crocs give the hippos a wide berth. I guess our safest course now will be to hug the shore as close as possible."

The suggestion commended itself to all, and they kept close to the shore until twilight. They landed before dark in a spot where the bush had been thinned out, probably by game coming to the water, and here made camp for the night. A species of African mimosa was located not far away, and the Zulus immediately got busy with their knives, chopping off branches covered with long, white thorns, and with these built a barrier to the landside of the encampment, making it impassable to wild animals, as well as men.

Cliff, Chandler and Helen watched the work, directed by the two Boers, as the barricade of thorns grew apace. Van Wyk smiled at them.

"That's one of the things you learn in Kaffir war," he remarked. "Many and many a Boer *laager* has been saved by these thorn barricades. In the old days our pioneers drew their ox wagons in a circle, and filled the spaces in between with these *doornbome*. The naked Bantus found it too painful to crawl through the thorns, which are as long and as sharp, and tougher than needles. And, when they tried to drag these obstructions away, they were shot full of holes with the elephant guns of the *voortrekkers*. My father was an elephant hunter, and he often told of the fearful damage these big bored rifles caused among the tribes. A gun like that made a hole as big as a man's fist, you know."

The Boer spoke as if building barricades out of thorn trees and the shooting of savages with elephant rifles were every day affairs. The girl, standing beside Cliff, shivered at the raw description, whereupon the American changed the conversation by suggesting that it was still light enough to go out and shoot meat for supper. Van der Merwe offered to go along, and the two cautiously made their way upstream to a drift where the tracks showed that game came down to water. Luck favored them, but it was already dark when they staggered back to camp with a large, fat *blesbok*.

Hendrik roasted the meat over the fire and this, together with coffee, Boer *beskuit*, and some canned preserves, made a sufficient and appetizing meal. Satembi and Umjala, however, asked for and received a haunch of the *blesbok*, and this they prepared in the way in which your true Zulu, who has not yet been spoiled by the white man's cuisine, likes his venison. First they dug a hole in the ground, and in this lighted a fire. After the hole was almost half filled with hot ashes and embers, they placed the meat in it, completely covering it with live coals. On this they placed another layer of hot ashes and leaves, and on top of it all again built a roaring fire. This fire the two Zulus kept going for three or four hours, then beat it out with their assagais and dug up the venison, which was now done to their taste.

Van der Merwe who, by tacit agreement, had now taken charge of the expedition, divided the night into watches. He made a thorough inspection of the thorn bush barricade, and it appeared to Cliff that the Boer was ill at ease.

"What's the matter, Van? You seem worried," the American said, lowering his voice.

"Yes, I am," Van der Merwe answered. "I have a feeling that we are being shadowed. I don't want to scare the others, but I have spoken about it to Van Wyk, and now I had better tell you. Remember when we passed between those sandbanks awhile ago? Well, while you people were looking at that fight between the croc and the hippo, I was watching the shore. I could have sworn

that I saw the end of a boat projecting from beneath the branches of a tree. The glare of the sun was so dazzling that I closed my eyes for a second. When I looked again, the boat, or whatever it was, had gone, but I distinctly saw the branches move, as if they had been pushed aside. No, it could not have been the breeze, for you know how hot it was—not a breath of wind anywhere, and jungle all around.

"Believe me, I kept a sharp lookout all afternoon, and so did Van Wyk. But we did not see a thing, although I stationed Satembi in the back of the boat, and told him to watch the banks. You know, Satembi has eyes like a *meerkat*. At one time he thought that he saw some smoke about half a mile behind us, but it was a mere wisp, and was gone before he could call me."

"Well, I guess we are safe for the night with that barricade," the American ventured.

The Boer shook his head.

"Yes and no. We are open to attack from the river, you know. I have never heard of natives attacking during the night, and least of all of them attacking in boats; but we are dealing with an entirely foreign tribe, and the Lord only knows what their habits of warfare are. If they are a kind of Zulu, as Hendrik says they are, they will not attack until dawn; but we can not take any chances. That's why Van Wyk and I are going to pass the night in the boat. Then, if they attack from the river, we'll be right on the job. Lucky thing those fellows haven't any firearms. At least, I hope Hendrik made no mistake, for if they have guns we are lost."

The Boer shook his head lugubriously, and Cliff, knowing the man's record as a Kaffir fighter, and the courage hidden behind his mask of caution, laughed inwardly. Aloud he said:

"All right, Van, I'll join you in the boat. But I think we have no cause to worry."

Van der Merwe now ordered the Zulus to douse the camp-fires. This they did by throwing sand over the flames and stamping on them with their bare feet.

"With that thorn bush barricade we don't need a blaze to hold off wild animals," the Boer explained. "A fire would only bring the enemy about our ears. Moreover, in case of a night attack, it furnishes an excellent target. Therefore, we are going to sleep like good little boys without a light."

DARKNESS was now complete, and the two Boers and the American groped their way to the boat, in which they spread their *kombeerse*, or veldt blankets. Van Wyk ignored his compatriot's positive orders against lights to the extent of smoking a pipe.

"Can't go to sleep without my pipe," he confided. "In fact, I feel a little nervous, and there's nothing like tobacco to steady one, you know."

From this Cliff learned that even the devil-may-care Van Wyk shared the anxiety of his countryman.

It was arranged that Cliff would stand the first watch until two in the morning, and that he was to call Van Wyk at that hour. For a while he could smell the aroma of the Magaliesberg in Van Wyk's pipe; then a duet of snores announced that his companions were asleep.

Seated on the side of the boat, he watched the river, and, as his eyes became accustomed to the dark, was able vaguely to make out his surroundings.

The banks on either side of the sloping drift were precipitous. From that quarter no attack was likely, since a noiseless ascent of those heights would be impossible in the dark. Therefore, if a surprise were planned from the side of the river, the enemy would have to come in boats, Cliff reasoned, and such boats could only approach at the spot he was guarding.

On either side of the open space in which the expedition had landed stood trees, the branches of which spread beyond the bank and over the water, creating ink black pools of darkness. Here

were two danger spots, to be watched closely.

Gradually, as the night wore on, the American's nerves relaxed. Nothing untoward happened. From time to time there was a splashing sound which he easily identified as being caused by *lagavaan*, the huge water lizard that reaches a length of eight, or even ten feet, which infests the banks of African rivers. And, about midnight, there came to his ears a peculiar rolling sound, like faraway thunder—a sound that made the two Boers stir in their sleep, and which Cliff knew for the roar of lions, out for their nocturnal hunting. But apart from these noises which the African *jager* soon grows used to, everything was peaceful and normal.

To keep awake, Cliff began to review the happenings of the last few days. That had been a queer meeting with the marooned Englishman and his sister. Strange chap, Chandler. Did not seem to worry a great deal about himself or his sister. Typical English nonchalance, but the fellow had no business bringing a woman on such a hare brained expedition. A wonderful girl, though. Lots of grit. Lord, what a horrible tragedy that business with the crocodile might have turned into! He was going to stick pretty close and see that she did not play any other fool tricks like trailing her hand in a crocodile infested stream.

Cliff began to nod. A slight sound; probably another of those confounded *lagavaans* hunting an otter. He shook his head to keep awake. No use dozing now, it must be almost time to call the others and take a nap himself. Then only a couple of hours till daylight—and that much for the fears and forebodings of Van der Merwe! A good old stick, Van, but rather cautious.

He tried to see Satembi, whose watch it was over there. Lord, how dark those African nights were! Once more his eyes rested on the black surface of the river. Was that a log just below those branches to his right? He could have sworn it was not there a minute ago. He rubbed his eyes, then looked again. There was more of it now—only a hundred yards or so away. What was that sticking out from the side of the log—a stick? It moved—and with a shout that rang through the jungle, the American jumped to his feet and fired. The shot was answered by a wild yell from the river, and at the same instant a long narrow boat shot out from below the overhanging branches.

Something whizzed by his ear and fell to the ground with a clanking sound. Without turning his head, he knew that the blade of an assagai had struck a rock. Now both Van Wyk and Van der Merwe were up and shooting, and he could just make out their heads over the gunwale beside him. Two more rifles joined in the shooting, then came the crack of an automatic. The girl was armed with a gun, Cliff remembered, as he reloaded hurriedly.

More assagais were thrown, but in the dark these fell wide of their mark. What made the affair eery beyond words was the grim silence of the foe. Never a cry from the river after that first wild yell; then suddenly came a slowing up of the hail of assagais.

"Hold your fire! We don't know what we are shooting at!" Van der Merwe shouted.

A few minutes passed, and nothing happened. Had they given up the attack?

"Look, baas, that light!" Hendrik shouted. "Yonder on the river."

For a bare second a faint glow, illuminating the outlines of a boat in midstream, hung over the water. Quick as a flash the two Boers blazed away at it, and this time there came to their ears the outcry of men mortally hit.

"Got them!" Van Wyk yelled, pumping his gun vindictively.

"Look out—duck!" Chandler shouted.

A point of light, lengthening into a flare, soared up from the black pit of the river. It described a perfect parabola—like a howitzer shell in the war, Cliff afterward declared. It fell, blazing furiously, close to the boat. Umjala dashed at it

and stamped the fire out with his bare feet. Again the assagais began to fall, thicker than ever this time.

"Bring that thing here," Van der Merwe commanded the Zulu. He held up a smoldering stick. "Just as I thought —a regular *harts toorts*. These fellows must be some kind of Zulus all right. They have taken a page from the book of old King Chaka, who used resin torches to fire the enemy *kraals*. Here, you, Hendrik, and you, Umjala, pick up every *toorts* that falls and heave it back into the river. They mean to fire the bush as well as show up our position, so they can throw their assagais. Watch the river and fire wherever you see a light."

Flares were rising from three or four different points, indicating a flotilla of as many boats.

The attackers were now making themselves heard. Evidently the excitement of the battle had got into their blood. A weird chant, or sing-song, arose from their boats, interspersed with loud yells and screams. Then, suddenly, a burst of wild laughter drifted across the water—crazy, high pitched laughter, like that of a hysterical woman.

"It sounds like a woman!" Cliff cried. "I'll bet it is a woman."

"Well, if it is a woman, all the worse for her," growled Van der Merwe. "Perhaps it's that mysterious female chieftain Hendrik was talking about. Here's hoping this one knocks her out of the boat!" And he blazed away into the dark.

All this time Hendrik and Umjala dashed about like mad, picking up the torches as fast as they dropped, heaving them back into the river. Both had been hit by assagais, but their wounds did not seem to bother them. Several torches fell into the jungle, but failed to set the green, wet bush afire.

"Those boats are coming in," Van der Merwe suddenly exclaimed. "They are going to attempt a landing."

He turned to the Englishman.

"Got the machine gun ready?"

Chandler nodded.

"All right then, fire away. Be sure to swing your gun around so as to sweep the entire river. See—they have stopped throwing torches. And—*allemachtig!* it is getting light! Hooray, here they come! Fire!"

Crowding in close to the shore the boats were barely visible in the dim half light. Now, with a sound like that of tiles falling from a roof, the machine gun came into action, pelting the advance with a storm of bullets. The defenders fired their rifles as rapidly as they could reload, and the girl's automatic cracked with unfailing regularity. Still the boats advanced. And then the storm of lead began to tell its story. For a moment the flotilla came to a stop, oars suspended over the surface. Then they broke! Three boats drew off rapidly toward the middle of the river; then, as day came, faded from sight. Evidently the fourth vessel was a shambles, for but one oar lifted feebly aboard her as she swung around and around, drifting downstream.

III

DAWN had come with startling suddenness, showing a river flowing placidly, not a boat on its smooth surface. Not a single hippo reared its head above the flood. Evidently these river dwellers had been scared off by the clamor of the battle. Yet, overhead, in the branches of a great *intombe*, the *bosveld musse*, or weaver birds, were flying to and fro, busily engaged in thatching over the roof of the tree—a labor they were to carry on until the entire head of the tree collapsed. As yet, however, the thatch which the small birds were so busily weaving, straw by straw, and wisp by wisp, was only half completed.

"That was a hot fight, Yankee," Van Wyk said cheerfully, slapping the American on the back. "We gave those *skepsels* something to worry about. But what are those Zulus of ours up to now?"

Satembi and Umjala were dragging something from the water. Cliff hurried

over, and thus laid eyes for the first time on one of the enemy warriors.

The man was dead. He had been a magnificent specimen, over six feet in height, broad shouldered, narrow waisted. Around his head was the smooth Zulu *kop* ring, denoting the fighting man and father of a household, while around the arms and below the knees he still wore the circlets of zebra tail hair, common among the Zulus. The body showed three bullet holes.

Van der Merwe looked the dead man over. "An Ama-Zulu, if ever I saw one," he declared. "*Kop* ring, zebra tail, and everything the *kehlas* wear in time of war. He probably had feathers in his hair, but those were washed out by the water. See, even his face was painted in the fashion of the *impies*. But what beats me is what these people, evidently Zulus of the truest type, are doing here on the lower reaches of an East Coast river, hundreds of miles from Zululand."

The Boer turned to Satembi. The Zulu was inspecting the corpse with considerable interest. Van der Merwe asked him some questions in Zulu.

Satembi listened impassively, then launched into one of those oratorical efforts that are dear to the heart of the Ama-Zulu.

"*Inkoos*," he began, "a tale is told in the *kraals* of my people. Many years ago, long before the white men came to the Great Rock Where The Two Manzies Meet* the people of the Ama-Zulu lived as one great tribe in a land far beyond the Smoke That Thunders.† The country was green with tall *tamboekie* grass; the cattle were fat, and the bush was red with herds of *impala*. But the Ama-Zulu nation having destroyed all the neighboring tribes, could not live in peace with one another. Chief made war upon chief, for there was not room in one *kraal* for so many young black bulls that thirsted for blood and battle! Thus the nation of the Ama-Zulu came to the parting of the ways. Some of the tribes remained in the ancient *kraals* that saw them born, but those *impies* that were the most warlike, went their way. South they trekked and east—so runs the tale. Those *impies* that marched south, beyond the Smoke That Thunders, into Natal and farther south yet, chose for their leader, Chaka the Terrible, of whom the Umlungus have heard.

"Before Chaka's advance all the Bantu fled, or were killed, and his *impies* took their wives, and their cattle, and the very young *umfaans*—raising the latter to be soldiers. Then, at last, Chaka the Terrible took the land of Natal for his kingdom, as a home land for the Ama-Zulu. All this is known to thee, *inkoos*. But, so goes the story, those other *impies* that did not follow Chaka, they turned east, and trekked for many days and nights, until they, too, reached a land, fat and rich, and green as Natal. The people of this land they put to the assagai, then declared it theirs. And they sent messengers to their blood brethren in Natal, to Chaka and his *impies*.

" 'Behold,' they said, 'we have taken a land, richer and larger than we need, with thousands of heads of cattle, far to the east of the Smoke That Thunders. Come thou, O Chaka, with thine *impies* and settle here with us.'

"But Chaka took their messengers, and had his *kehlas* throw them from the Mountain of the Execution, overlooking his royal *kraal*. But one man he saved, and sent him back whence he came, with this message:

" 'I, Chaka, have taken mine own land for mine own people. I know not the traitors, naming themselves Ama-Zulu, who refused to follow me. Send no more messengers, or I will bleach their bones besides those that now lie within assagai throw of my royal *kraal*.'

"Thus, *inkoos*, it befell that the two branches of the Ama-Zulu nation became estranged from one another. And, therefore, *inkoos*, I leave it to thee to say who these people may be that attacked us in the night, and of whom this dead man, he

*The Cape of Good Hope. †Victoria Falls.

who appears like one of the Ama-Zulu, is the only one we have yet seen."

And Satembi contemptuously stirred the corpse with his foot, as if the inter-tribal enmity of a hundred years were but a thing of yesterday, and yet smoldering.

Van der Merwe thoughtfully stroked his beard.

"Hm—I shouldn't wonder if Satembi has hit upon the right solution," he said. "I remember having heard his story, or one like it, before. You know, there's always been a lot of speculation as to the old homeland of the Ama-Zulu nation. It's a fact that, when Johan Van Riebeek first settled at the Cape, the country to the north was practically an empty land. Neither did the old Portuguese, who followed Vasco da Gama after he first rounded the Cape of Good Hope, find any Zulus in Natal. Those devils came later, and their first meeting with the whites came when they clashed with the pioneer Boers. Some historians believe that the Zulu nation came down south from some place far in the interior of Africa—from as far north as the banks of Victoria Nyanza. However that may be, our friends of last night are certainly a kind of Zulu, and that means we are in for plenty of trouble."

As if confirming this remark, there came a cry from Hendrik.

"*Kyk, baas, daar!*" With bulging eyes the Hottentot stood staring at a clump of bush not ten yards away. There, through the *bosveld*, his clothing torn to shreds, his face bleeding, came a white man, staggering and stumbling. Having gained the clearing, he fell in a heap.

The American was the first to reach the unconscious man. A swallow of fiery Cape *dop*, administered hastily and none too gently, had the desired effect. The man sat up, still in a stupor, and looked about him. Then his eyes rested on the Hottentot with a gleam of recognition, and his face twitched strangely.

"By Jove, the chap is laughing at us," Chandler exclaimed. "What's the joke, old man?"

The stranger did not answer, but continued to grimace at the Hottentot, who was now trembling all over. Then, suddenly, the newcomer guffawed loudly, and barked:

"Hendrik, don't you know me?"

The Hottentot looked as if he was seeing a ghost. Twice he opened his mouth to speak, and at last whispered:

"*Baas Dirks! Die spook van Baas Dirks!*"

Evidently the stranger thought this a huge joke, for he roared with laughter and, unsteadily gaining his feet, addressed himself to the company.

"THE OLD yellow belly takes me for a spook," he cackled. "No wonder! Some one was trying to push an assagai into me, when he last saw me. But they thought better of it and they kept me alive to work their damned boats for them. Then, last night, I was forced to row the boat of that she-devil herself. Oh, what a time you gave them! Shot them full of holes, you did, all night long. I felt like cheering. But the *kehla* they had posted over me kept pricking my skin with the point of his assagai, so mum was the word. Then one of your last shots toppled the devil over. He went with a splash, and I jumped after his carcass. He's feeding the crocs by now."

He reached out and, taking the bottle from Van Wyk, took a long pull of the brandy. Then he shook hands all around, the while Hendrik, convinced at last that he was not seeing ghosts, fairly chattered with glee.

"Let's get this right," Van der Merwe said. "Do I understand that you are Jan Dirks who headed the expedition of which this Hottentot was a member, and which was exterminated by these Ama-Zulus?"

The stranger nodded.

"Right you are. I thought I was the only man left alive of the outfit, and am surprised that Hendrik is still living. Those Hottentots are tough, though. Soap and water is the only thing that kills them. Now let me wash, and give me a

bite to eat, and then we'll talk. I'm hungry enough to eat a hippo."

The delighted Hendrik was told to "stop capering around like a baboon", and serve his former master with hot coffee and food. Within a few minutes they watched Dirks devour several slabs of barbecued *blesbok* flesh, the better part of a sack of *beskuit*, all washed down with strong black coffee.

Helen watched him in amazement, and smiled as Dirks looked up and apologized for his appetite.

"Making a regular hog of myself," he admitted cheerfully. "But you can not imagine how good it is again to taste *witman's kos*. You know, those blighters never fed me a thing beyond a handout of mealie pap twice a day, and maybe a bitter *pompelmoes* once in a while. If you want to reduce, there's nothing like a job as rower for them, believe me."

He unceremoniously wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, then asked:

"Got an old pipe and a handful of tobacco? Thanks—that old corncob will do nicely. And real Boer tobacco—Magaliesberg, as I live! This is almost too good to be true."

He lighted his pipe, smoked in silence for a moment and then announced:

"I suppose there are some questions you would like me to answer. As for myself, I've a hunch you are after that treasure of old Oom Paul's. If so, count me in! There's nothing I would like better than to meet the Ama-layta again—with a gun and a belt full of cartridges. I have a tidy score to settle, take my word for it."

Each member of the expedition had some question to ask, it appeared, and by common consent, Cliff constituted himself the spokesman.

"Are those people real Zulus?" he asked.

"You bet they are," Dirks replied. "You could move their whole damn' tribe right down into Zululand and never see any difference. They call themselves Ama-layta. I got on speaking terms with one of their witch doctors, a hoary old scoundrel who pretended that he could read the past as well as the future in the innards of slaughtered oxen. This faker told me that the tribe had a legend that their blood brethren, many years ago, had pushed south, and had established a powerful state beyond the Smoke That Thunders. Oh, these people are Zulus, all right, though their surroundings have taught them several customs and tricks that are unknown in Zululand. For instance, they have learned to navigate boats, which is something the South African Zulu knows next to nothing about, and they have become fish eaters, too. And, as you know, our Zulus would rather be shot than eat fish. But, with these few exceptions, they are as like to Dinizulu's men as peas in a pod."

Cliff glanced at his companions.

"Fits in with our theory," he declared. Helen was leaning forward, a question on her lips.

"Want to ask something?" said Cliff. "Go ahead, it's your turn."

She gave him a friendly little nod, then turned to Dirks.

"During the fighting we heard what sounded like the laughter of a mad woman. It was awful. But it certainly excited our curiosity, and just now, you said something about a she-devil. Do you mean that these people take their women with them to war and that we have stumbled across some fighting Amazons?"

Dirks nodded.

"Yes, you did hear a woman laugh," he said. "She always laughs when men are being killed! The woman whose laughter you heard is the *inkoosiezana*—chieftainess—of these people, and she's the most cruel, inhuman creature I have ever set eyes on, and one of the most beautiful."

Dirks looked around the circle and noted the unbelief of his listeners.

"Oh, I know it is not customary for Zulus to be ruled by a woman," he admitted. "They regard women as of less value than cattle. But not in the case of this woman, I assure you. That she-devil has the entire tribe buffaloed to such

an extent that, if she were to order them to jump into the gaping jaws of the crocodiles, they would obey, or be pitched in by their fellows. Who is she?" He turned dramatically to Helen.

"That woman has the beauty of a sleek lioness, when the veldt is green with early rains and hunting is good. Frankly, I think she is more of a female leopard than a woman. You would think so too, if you had seen her, seated in state under the counsel tree, condemning to death those who have crossed or disobeyed her ever so little. And how she hates the whites—though she is part white herself."

"A white woman?" Cliff was plainly incredulous.

"No—only partly so. As I said before, I got rather chummy with one of the old *matagati* of the tribe, and his story was that the *inkoosiezana* was the child of a Portuguese and a Swahili woman, both of whom were killed by a marauding party of Ama-layta. For some reason or other the girl's life was spared, and she grew up to lord it over the tribe. She appears to be filled with hatred of the whites, but has been smart enough to keep her people from getting into armed conflict with the Portuguese of Mozambique. And, in this policy of isolation, she has been aided by the topography of the country, for their land is hard to reach. You see, after you follow this river for another thirty miles or so, it looses itself in a huge swamp. The river then splits into a number of creeks. The swamp is overgrown with high *riet*, and this makes progress extremely difficult."

"THEN it would be impossible to make the entire trip by boat?" Van der Merwe asked.

"Out of the question," Dirks declared. "At the point where the river runs into the marsh, we'll have to leave the boat and hide it, taking care to mark the spot so we can find it again. Then we must make our way through the morass for twenty miles, before we can reach the higher ground which is the country of the Ama-layta. The trip requires time and careful planning. A few elevated ridges lead through the swamp, and over these ridges we must march in single file, traveling one behind the other—just like the Kaffirs in the Transvaal when they go to look for work in the mines. I have made several trips over these *paadjes*, and know the way. The swamp extends on both sides of these narrow ridges, and the country, therefore, does not offer much chance for ambush. That's one reason why the Ama-layta attacked you here, instead of waiting till you trekked farther inland. But we'll have to watch our step."

Van der Merwe grunted.

"You have not mentioned the most important part. This is not a pleasure trip, you know. Oom Paul's gold is what we're after. Have the Ama-layta got it, and if so, what chance have we of laying our hands on it?"

Dirks nodded.

"Naturally, you're after the gold. So was I—until I met the Ama-layta. Now I am after them first, the gold being secondary, as far as I'm concerned. Well, the stuff is there—every bar of it. I ought to know, for I sweated enough packing it through the swamp."

"But what do those niggers want it for?" Cliff asked curiously. "They couldn't use it to forge assagai blades."

Dirks laughed.

"A lady's whim, that's all! You should have seen that she-devil, the *inkoosiezana*, when she handled the shiny stuff. I thought she was going to hug it. You see, being half white, she has a taste for gewgaws and finery and, in a lesser degree, so have the other women of the tribe."

"Then the *inkoosiezana* wants the gold for personal adornment only?" Cliff asked.

Dirks shook his head.

"No. The Ama-layta don't know a thing about jewelry. They are savages, pure and simple. But the *inkoosiezana*, by some curious atavistic trait, appears, in the back of her head, to have a dim recollection of old King Sol in all his glory. In other words, savage woman

though she is, her white heritage and blood have worked in her to the extent that she is putting on all the airs and graces of royalty. I believe she despises the Ama-layta and their ways. She, herself, lives in the ruins of an old fortress, or temple, or whatever it is. Yes, that's another of the wonders of this strange land. It contains a huge ruin, almost as large as Zimbabwe itself. I am inclined to class it with the other Phœnician ruins of South Africa, which date back to the days of Hiram, the King of Phœnicia, who brought treasure from the land of Ophir, otherwise South Africa."

"All of which is most interesting," Cliff interposed, "but what has it got to do with Kruger's gold?"

"Everything. You see, the *inkoosiezana* conceived the idea that the tribe, of which she is the high priestess, as well as the chieftainess, must have an altar, or sacrificial block, of solid gold. So there it stands today, glittering under the sun, in the court of the ancient ruin. I saw it once, just after they had slaughtered an ox, and it was not a pretty sight. The fact that two expeditions of white men came after the gold probably gave the *inkoosiezana* an inkling of its value; or possibly she may have been merely attracted by appearances. It is easy to see that the possession of this resplendent golden altar heightens the *inkoosiezana's* standing in the eyes of the Ama-layta. She rules them with a hand of iron! I'll bet old Kruger never dreamed that the gold, which he shipped out of Johannesburg during the Boer War, would eventually become a sacrificial altar for savages."

"Do you think she will give up the stuff without a battle?" Cliff asked naively.

"Not a chance! We'll have to fight for it. But your expedition has plenty of rifles, which is something they lack, and then there is the machine gun. If they don't succeed in ambushing us we ought to lick 'em."

His confidence proved effective, and the expedition got under way. All morning they pulled at the oars, making good headway. The swamp of which Dirks had spoken was reached by noon. For a few miles the river wandered between low, reed grown banks, but soon it began to spread out into a lagoon. Ultimately the water became so shallow that the boat had to be pushed from mudbank to shoal. At last the oars, oozing into mud at every stroke, became useless. A stench of decaying matter rose from the swamp, and it was evident that further navigation was out of the question.

A hiding place was found for the boat in a clump of amphibious bush, the branches of which lifted from the shallows like the arms of a drowning man. Weapons, munitions and supplies were now divided among the men and, after much floundering about, Dirks at last led the way to a narrow ridge that twisted like a snake among the slimy growth of the marsh.

"I'll lead," he announced. "You follow in single file and, whatever you do, stick to the ridge, however narrow and difficult it gets. Part of this swamp is just soft mud in which a man will sink from sight in no time, and we don't want any accidents. Also, crocs and snakes are numerous, so look out. Better let the lady walk between you two men—" pointing to Cliff and Van Wyk—"so you can keep an eye on her. It's only twenty miles, but every inch of it is hell."

THE PATH rose less than a foot above the surrounding quagmire. In some places it had almost sunk into the morass, and here Dirks ventured slowly, probing every step with the point of an assagai he had borrowed from Satembi. Progress was tedious, and with it all, the heat became almost unbearable. Yet they pushed on without serious accident, often wading knee deep through mud that oozed over the pathway.

"A fine looking bunch!" Cliff laughed as he looked at the black mud dripping from his khaki breeches. "A few more places like that, and we can pass for niggers ourselves. Phew, it's hot!"

A little ahead was a thicket of tall *riet*, crowned with wavy tufts like ostrich

feathers. Cliff had hardly spoken when, from the thicket, something sped straight at him. He ducked and almost fell. Recovering his balance, he saw an assagai plunge into the mud, not a yard away. Now the rifles crashed all along the line. A number of *kaross* bedecked figures darted from the thicket, reached the causeway, and were off in a rain of mud and bullets. But as they ran, a bullet hit one of their number. Throwing up his arms, the wounded warrior tumbled headlong into the swamp on top of his shield. For a moment he fought desperately to regain the causeway, then suddenly grew limp.

"The poor devil is being sucked into the ooze," the American cried.

It was true. The lower part of the body had disappeared, and the wounded man was sinking yet farther. He was fully ten feet from the causeway, and Satembi's long spear could not reach him.

The little party of whites stood frozen with horror. Presently they saw the warrior sink to his arm pits in the black mud, which seemed to rise and bubble about him. Throughout it all he remained silent. The girl screamed and turned her face away—and the gaily decorated head slipped from sight. They trekked on in silence, too horror stricken for conversation.

Progress became yet slower, for various clumps of bush and amphibious trees bordered the causeway, any of which might mean a fresh ambush. In one place the path was practically covered with a slimy growth into which Dirks fired several shots to make sure that no enemy was lying in wait. But only a *korhaan* bevy took flight noisily, and it became evident that the Ama-layta had retired from the marshy field.

The sun was setting when Dirks at last announced that they were entering on the final stretch of this nightmare trek and soon, on turning a bend between two clumps of *riet*, higher ground was seen a few yards ahead. The transition from swamp to firm land was the signal for a much needed rest. But after a few minutes Dirks urged that the *trek* be resumed.

"We can not stay here tonight," he pointed out. "Those damned swamp mosquitoes would eat us alive. Let's push on for a few miles. I know a spot where there is water and a safe camping place."

The spot to which he now led the way had, indeed, a strategic value. It was a small native *boma*, or corral, occasionally used to shelter cattle, and was protected on three sides by a stone wall, and on the fourth by an impenetrable hedge of low *doornbome*. At the corner, where the wall and the thorn bush barrier met, a spring of clear water bubbled from the stony soil.

Van der Merwe nodded approval of the place.

"We could hold this against a couple of *impies*, though I hardly think they will attack us here."

Night had come, and Hendrik hurriedly prepared a rather sketchy meal and some hot coffee. After the meal Van der Merwe assigned the watches. The first watch fell to the two Zulus and the Hottentot, the rest of the night being divided between the white men.

Helen offered in vain to stand a watch herself.

"Nothing doing," the American retorted sharply. "You need your beauty sleep."

"*Hoor, hoor!*" the two Boers boomed in unison, Van Wyk winking at his countryman as Cliff set himself to arrange a sleeping place for the girl by gathering dry leaves, and collecting every *kombeers* he could lay his hands on.

"Strikes me we are going to have a little romance on this trip," Van Wyk whispered to Van der Merwe. "Our Yankee pal seems smitten with that young English woman!"

The only answer was a violent push, which brought Van Wyk smack up against the stone wall.

"Talk sense!" Van der Merwe growled. "Cliff knows this is no time for a man to court. Mind your own *bezigheid*, you little sawed-off runt. What do you know about romance anyhow?"

IV

SOME two hours before dawn, Satembi called the white men to stand their watch. The veldt was almost clear of bush, and there was the feeble light of a new quarter moon. Therefore, visibility from the *kopje* would have been fair, had it not been for a white miasma arising out of the neighboring swamp. This low mist, or *nevel*, as the Boers called it, did not rise higher than three or four feet above the ground. Swaying hither and thither in the breeze that stirs the veldt just before dawn, it gave the surrounding country an eery and ghostly appearance.

"Watch carefully, fellows," Van der Merwe cautioned. "That mist is just dense enough for a surprise party to creep up on their bellies close to the wall. Be ready to shoot at the first thing you see moving in the fog!"

Dirks and the Englishman were posted at the thorn hedge, which was comparatively impassable. Thus once again the strain of watching, peering into the mist, fell upon Cliff and the two Boers.

Not a sound broke the deep silence of the African night. Cliff's eyes were smarting, but remembering the margin by which his watchfulness had averted disaster the night before, he did not relax his vigilance. Van Wyk was stationed nearby.

Suddenly the Boer spoke in a whisper, without turning his head. Cliff edged close.

"What is it, Van? Speak louder."

The Boer's whisper barely carried to the ears of his companion.

"There, don't you see it—the white figure in the mist? Now it's gone. I could have sworn it was a woman. She came up out of the fog. I seemed to see her face and eyes. Lord, there she is again! The place is haunted!"

The usually unimaginative Van Wyk was in a blue funk. His voice shook and his rifle barrel clanked on the stone parapet.

Cliff looked intently, but all he could make out was a whirl of fog. Fantastic shapes were swaying to and fro in the breeze, wraiths of mist without substance. The American concluded that the Boer had been seeing things.

"Imagination, old fellow," he answered, slightly raising his voice. "It's just that damned fog!"

As if mocking his assertion, a sound of low, crooning laughter floated from the curtain of mist. Cliff shivered at the uncanny sound, and momentarily he shared the Boer's superstition.

Van Wyk swore.

"*Verdomd!* Woman or spook, I am going to shoot!"

Unsteadily, he lifted his rifle. Just then a gust of wind tore through the mist, clearing the ground. There, straight in line with the sights of the Boer's rifle, stood a woman—tall and willowy. She advanced slowly, as if unaware of the deadly potentialities of the weapon aimed at her breast. Van Wyk's hand trembled, and his rifle barrel wavered. The American reached out and grasped the weapon.

"It's a flesh-and-blood woman, old chap," he said. "She's alone. And—she's almost white! Don't shoot."

As though she understood, the woman turned her lustrous black eyes full on the young American, then smiled dazzlingly. Her dress resembled that of the Swahili women of the upper East Coast, and a white *burnous*, as worn by the Arabs, was wrapped about her slender form. Fearlessly she walked straight to the stone barricade, raising her left arm in the characteristic Zulu salute. She was, as Cliff had said, almost white. Yet there was nothing incongruous in the graceful manner in which she saluted.

At last she spoke.

"*Bayete!*"

Van der Merwe had approached.

"*Allemachtig*, the royal salute of the Ama-Zulu!"

Her eyes rested on the tall form of the Boer. Gravely, she bent her head and repeated—

"*Bayete!*"

Van der Merwe raised his hand.

"*Bayete, Inkoosiezana!*"

"She's the *inkoosiezana* of the Ama-layta," Van Wyk exclaimed. "The she-devil Dirks has been talking about. The nerve of her! Old Van der Merwe guessed right the first time! Well, she doesn't look bad to me, and if they all look like that, then bring on your she-devils, says I!"

The woman took no notice of the interruption. She addressed Van der Merwe, speaking so rapidly that neither Cliff nor Van Wyk could understand. There was a curious lilt to the way in which she spoke the Ama-Zulu tongue. However, Van der Merwe, who spoke Chaka's tongue like a *kehla*, caught her meaning readily enough and answered in fluent Zulu. At first the woman seemed equally puzzled at the Boer's accent, but then she understood, and smiled again.

Van der Merwe turned to his companions, bewilderment written all over his bearded features.

"She seems friendly enough," he said. "Says those attacks on us were all a mistake. She guarantees protection and, as a token of her good faith, has now called on us alone."

Dawn had come as they talked, and the other members of the expedition, startled from sleep, crowded around.

Dirks now thrust himself forward and looked at the *inkoosiezana* in amazement, tinged with fury and fear.

"That's the she-devil I told you about!" He almost shouted with excitement. "Don't trust her; she is full of treachery, the hell cat! For sixpence I'd shoot her where she stands!"

The *inkoosiezana* stared at him, shrugged her shapely shoulders and turned her back disdainfully. This brought her face to face with Helen Chandler. The two women regarded each other curiously, but neither spoke.

Again the *inkoosiezana* addressed Van der Merwe. This time she talked with extreme deliberation, and all followed her meaning without difficulty.

"*Umlungus*—white men—and thou, my sister whose skin is yet whiter than mine, though I like it not for its pallor, I have come to welcome thee to the country of the Ama-layta. Yes, I welcome thee—I who led my *impie* against thee on the swift *manzie* but two nights ago. It was all because we were mistaken. My messengers came up from the seacoast.

" 'Behold,' they cried, 'the Arabi are coming.' We have good cause to fear these Arabi, for twice have they come against us in boats, over the Great Manzi That Has No End. Yet each time we have beaten them back, their heads bleeding. Thus it was that, in the dark night, we beheld in thee our ancient enemy. But this day, after a handful of my warriors waylaid thee in the Land That Seems Like Water, they brought word that these men were *umlungu*, not Arabi. Then it was that I commanded my people to molest thee no further. Believe me, O friends, I could have easily slain thee, had I brought my full force against thee on the narrow pathway. But thy blood is like unto mine, for I too am white of skin, and I would not slay those whom I call kindred. Therefore, I again bid thee welcome to the land of the Ama-layta. Mine is a poor and peaceful people, but hospitality is our ancient boast, and what we have is thine. Come, therefore, to my *kaya*, which shall be thine for as long as thou wouldst remain with us."

She made a sweeping gesture of the surrounding country, and stood silent.

THE ENGLISHMAN was the first to speak.

"Fair enough," he said. "Sounds good to me. I would much rather be friends with these *kehlas* —or whatever the bucks call themselves —than fight them. Possibly the lady is speaking the truth, and our previous unpleasantness was all a mistake."

"Mistake nothing," Cliff snorted. "You must be simple minded, Chandler. They knew jolly well that they were dealing with white people, and not with a bunch of Arabs. Have you forgotten what

Dirks here told us, and his experiences with this lady and her 'peaceful' people? Peaceful, my pipe! If what we have seen of them thus far is a sample of their pacific nature, then I don't care to be about when they commence to get riled. No, I agree with Dirks, she's up to something. The question now is whether we'll tell her that we don't trust her, and be damned to her and her peaceful tribe, or whether we should pretend to be taken in. What do you say, Van der Merwe?"

The tall Boer stroked his beard thoughtfully.

"This is difficult," he said. "If we tell her outright to go to blazes, we have a battle on our hands from the word go. That's that! The alternative is to let her think that we believe her and to accept whatever hospitality she has to offer. However, we must be on the alert, day and night, and under no circumstances let her jockey us into any position that is not of our own choosing. We will select our quarters, and must not allow her *kehlas* to get too close. And we'll carry our own guns. If that's all right with you fellows, I'll tell her so."

All agreed, with the exception of Dirks, who urged that it would be better to tie her up, or shoot her out of hand. He grew excited about it, and sulked by himself when Van der Merwe bruskly remarked that the "ayes" had it, and that Dirks would have to abide by the decision of the majority. This course of action decided upon, Van der Merwe addressed the *inkoosiezana*, saying that the *umlungu* would forget the late unpleasantness, that they assumed previous hostilities were based on a misunderstanding, and that they gladly accepted her hospitality. However, he said, they would have to reserve for themselves entire freedom of movement and action during their stay in the country of the Ama-layta.

The *inkoosiezana* smiled and nodded like a gratified hostess. She evidently was well pleased with the success of her mission and, beckoning to Helen, asked the girl to walk with her. She would lead the way to the *kraal* of her people, she said.

The path along which they followed their guide was well worn. Down hill it went, and then again up another *kopje*, and from this they had their first view of the *kraal* of the Ama-layta. The *stad* was just a typical Zulu *kraal* of beehive huts, not far from a small river which glittered like a silvery ribbon in the rays of the morning sun. Overlooking the *kraal* was a steep plateau, but that which crowned the summit of the hill was what called forth exclamations of wonder and admiration on the part of the whites. For there, perched on this African eminence, like an ancient robber baron's castle on the storied Rhine, stood a tremendous ruin of towers and battlements, such as no Bantu tribe ever dreamed of building.

Cliff was the first to express the amazement of his party.

"I'll be darned if it's not another Zimbabwe," he exclaimed. "You remember, Van, the time we visited Zimbabwe and the Khami ruins in Rhodesia? Look—the same conglomeration of one wall after another, and the identical set of conical towers. Here's a find that will set the world talking, besides driving the scientists dippy! They say Zimbabwe and Khami were built by the Phœnicians, and now it begins to look as if those adventurous old gold seekers have been building fortresses all over Africa. What a find!"

The *inkoosiezana* appeared to enjoy the surprise of her visitors, but made no comment, except to point and say:

"Behold, the *kaya* of the *inkoosiezana!* It shall be your home, *umganaam!*"

Another mile brought them to a fordable drift in the river, where they picked their way over a slippery pathway of huge rocks thrown into the water by way of a bridge. A number of *kehlas*, armed with shields and assagais, were drawn up on the other side of the river and, at the sight, the white men took a firmer grasp on their weapons. This move did not escape the *inkoosiezana*, who smiled her

slow smile. She spoke a brief command, whereupon the warriors turned about smartly, and marched off toward the *kraal*, never looking back once.

"That speaks rather in favor of the woman," Van Wyk remarked. "Those *kehlas* had a good chance to assagai us as we forded the river. Maybe, after all, she's going to play the game straight."

Dirks laughed jeeringly.

"Played the game, did she? Sure she did, and do you know why?" He held up his six-shooter. "She knew we had her covered and that, at the first sign of treachery, this little shiny friend of mine would have tumbled her off the rocks into the water. And that's just how long she'll play the game, and don't you forget it."

Another half mile or so brought them close to the *stad*, or native town, which was entirely surrounded by a wall, built crudely of slabs of blue slate. As they got near the place, Van der Merwe whispered to the American:

"We must not pass through the *stad*, if that is her plan. I'm a Boer, you know! There have been too many cases of white trekkers being invited into a Zulu *kraal*, only to be massacred by a mob of assagai throwing warriors. Why, my own great-grandfather was one of the *voortrekkers*—Boer pioneers—who lost their lives when that bloody traitor, Dingaan, the son of Chaka, invited them into his *kraal*, and slaughtered every mother's son of them. There's no hope, once you get inside that steel ring of the *impie's* assagais. Therefore, if the lady asks us in, we'll have business elsewhere!

"Absolutely right," Cliff agreed. "Nix on that come-into-my-parlor business!"

However, their fears proved groundless, for, on reaching the *kraal*, the *inkoosiezana* turned to the right, following a rough road that passed well beyond the town to the foot of the plateau, where it began to circle the hill, leading to the grim old ruin on the summit. It was a stiff climb, but at last they arrived at an opening in the outer wall. This rampart was about twenty feet high and was constructed like the rest of the ruin, of small cubes of hand tooled granite.

ENTERING the ancient fortress, or temple, they passed two conical towers, some forty feet high. The place seemed deserted; not a head ring wearing warrior was about, nor was there a sign of life until they suddenly emerged from between two narrow walls into an open square. Here a number of people were assembled, mostly women and children, but also a few men. The latter, however, were unarmed.

The approach of the party caused considerable commotion, the people crowding around curiously, without display of hostility. Built flush with the inner wall of the square were a number of crude *kayas*—not of the usual beehive sort, but square, with walls of adobe covered slate and flat roofed. On these roofs large quantities of pumpkin, *kalabas* and other produce were being cured in the sun, including unappetizing and ragged looking strips of *springbok* flesh for *biltong*, or jerky. Fowl and sheep wandered freely about, and old Kaffir women sat around, smoking *dagga* from small bowled pipes.

The *inkoosiezana* stopped before two large *kayas* set close together and indicated that these would be at the disposal of the white members of the party. Their native servants could camp out in the space between the *kayas*, she said.

Van der Merwe looked the place over and seemed satisfied.

"With our guns we could easily hold these stone buildings against the *impie*," he declared.

Then, turning to their hostess, he asked about food supplies. The *inkoosiezana* spoke some words to a tall Zulu matron who, apparently, was a personal handmaiden. The woman left and returned shortly, followed by three young girls carrying bowls of ground mealies, *maas*, or curdled milk, and a sheep from which the blood still dripped. A Zulu boy staggered along in the rear of the procession, hugging a huge earthen bowl

filled to the brim with *kaffirbeer*, brewed from Kaffir *koren*. Hendrik, the Hottentot, in his rôle of chef to the expedition, took charge of the supplies. His little black eyes glistened at sight of the beer, and he was surreptitiously helping himself, dipping into the bowl with a small gourd, when Van Wyk spotted him. Noiselessly the Boer crept up behind the Hottentot, who was lifting the gourd to his lips for the third time. Van Wyk's foot shot out, and with a howl of anguished surprise the Hottentot dropped the gourd.

"Let me catch you touching another drop of that stuff, you yellow rascal, and I'll beat you with the whip," the Dutchman roared. "*Voetsak!* Get to work on that mutton."

The Hottentot ducked and muttered fearfully. A moment later he was hard at work getting supper.

The *inkoosiezana* had departed after showing them their quarters. Van der Merwe asked Cliff to accompany him on a turn around the place. They lighted their pipes and started.

The inner square of the ancient fortress proved an interesting place.

"What the deuce is that?" the American exclaimed, as they approached the huge wall. He pointed at a large round ring made of polished granite, cleverly set into the wall. "And there's another and another. Why, the entire wall is set with these rings at regular distances! You would almost think they used them to tether their horses. Only, the rings are set too close to the ground for that."

They stood yet pondering the mystery when Chandler strolled up. The Englishman was interested, but not surprised.

"Know what these are?" he asked, fingering the smooth stone ring. "Very odd, but not unusual in Africa. They are slave rings, meaning that the johnnies who built this old ruin—the Phœnicians, or some other civilization that's been lost track of—kept their slaves tied up here. Quite interesting, and something science will rave over. Easy to reconstruct the story. Most likely those chaps came from some ancient center of civilization and sailed up the same river by which we came. Probably the swamp in those days was still river, and was navigable close to this point. They probably came after gold, ivory and slaves. Had to defend themselves from the wild tribes, and needed slaves to work the shallow diggings that are found all over the East Coast, and as far south as Rhodesia. So they built this fortress and kept their slaves in the center of it. No doubt about it."

The three sauntered on. Presently they came to what appeared to be a low mound covered with skins.

"What in the world is this?" Cliff wondered. "Must be something unusual. See, they've spread a splendid *luipaard kaross* over it. That skin alone would fetch a couple of hundred quid in Jo'burg."

"Not hard to guess! I'll make you a bet I can tell what it is," Van der Merwe said.

"You mean . . ."

"Yes, I mean just that. Of course, it's the golden altar of which Dirks has told us, and which was built by the *inkoosiezana* out of poor old Oom Paul's treasure."

Cliff stepped forward, ready to lift a corner of the *kaross*, but the Boer held out a restraining hand.

"Better not, old man. Our hostess has her eye on us. She might take it amiss. And we are bound to see it sooner or later."

Cliff turned. The *inkoosiezana* was standing in front of her *kaya*. The American flushed rather guiltily and walked on.

THE *inkoosiezana* did not appear again that day, and the night passed quietly. The whites were comfortable enough in the stone *kayas* which were better furnished than the average guest house in a Zulu *kraal*. Palm leaf mats, or *mkekas*, as the Bantu tribes call them, were spread over the *koei-mist*—cow

dung floors—and the furniture consisted of benches, and stools with hippo leather seats. As Van Wyk said, "All the comforts of home." Yet a guard was set during the night.

Early the next morning, Satembi, the Zulu, knocked at the *kaya* and announced that an *induna* wished to have speech with the leader of the *umlungu*. Van der Merwe acted as spokesman. The *induna* announced himself as a messenger of the *inkoosiezana*, who invited the *umlungu* to attend a review of her *impies*, which were to stage a war dance in their honor. In answer to the Boer's question, the *induna* replied that the war dance would be held at the *indaba intombe*—meeting place tree—on the *waio-bulala*, or place of slaughter.

This did not sound very promising, but the Boer never flinched. He calmly informed the *induna* that the *umlungu* would be pleased to attend the war dance, but added significantly that they would bring their entire armament, as befitted the occasion. The Ama-layta chieftain remained imperturbable. His demeanor never indicated that he understood the implied threat of the white man, and he took his leave in a dignified manner.

As soon as the messenger had gone, Van der Merwe consulted with his companions.

"It's the old Ama-Zulu trick," he exclaimed. "Invite you to look at a war dance and then attack in earnest. I did not want to let on that we were scared, so I accepted. Could think of no good excuse. Quick, Dirks, give us the lay of the land. What's this confounded place of slaughter? Can we put up a fight there, if necessary?"

The former captive of the Ama-layta shook his head lugubriously.

"If we are crazy enough to go near that accursed place, our lives aren't worth a farthing," he said. "It's an open plain, and the *indaba* tree is the only shelter on it. They'd have us surrounded and, after one or two rushes, we would be overwhelmed. Now you see why you should have shot that she-devil when we had her in our power. At least we should have tied her up." He fell silent, and moodily started cleaning his revolver.

For a while no one spoke. Then Cliff exclaimed—

"I've got it."

"Got what?" Dirks asked.

"A way out of this mess," Cliff said.

"The devil you have! Speak up, young fellow," Van der Merwe urged.

"Well, it's like this. The *inkoosiezana* seems to be the whole works among these natives. In other words, they do her slightest bidding, and would not have any harm come to her. Well, here's my plan. She will accompany us when we go out to see that war dance of theirs. We must stick closer to her than hair on a camel's back. As soon as we see a disposition on her part to separate from us, we must gently but firmly remind her that the place of a hostess is with her guests. One of us should be told off as escort, or jailer, for the fair lady. In fact, I'll take on that little job myself, if you say so. Then, if the *impies* try to attack us, we'll make a play of shooting their boss. How about it?"

A chorus of approval greeted the American's plan.

"The only way out," Chandler commented. "Hate to get rough with a lady, but our own skins come first. It would never do for us to sulk here in this ruin, like old Achilles in his tent. Never let those chappies think we're afraid of 'em!"

V

THE WAR dance was to take place in the afternoon, and the white men busied themselves looking after their defense. Chandler went over the machine gun with loving care, and Cliff improved the shining hour by taking Helen Chandler for a stroll around the central square of the ruin. His pretext was that he wanted to show her the slave rings in the walls and the mound covered with leopard skins. However, being

blessed with a woman's intuition, Helen felt the young American's interest concerned not the ancient history of the place, nor the mystery of the great treasure close at hand, but her own charming self; and the knowledge was not distasteful to her. She had come to darkest Africa for adventure, and here romance was being added for good measure.

Glancing at Cliff from the corner of her eye, she admitted to herself that she had grown to like the American. Was it more than a mere liking? She blushed and simulated a deep and impersonal interest as Cliff pointed out the smooth stone rings by which slaves were chained many centuries ago to the ancient wall.

Returning to the *kayas*, they found the other members of the expedition grouped around the *inkoosiezana*, who was gorgeously clad in a magnificent *kaross* of leopard skin, draped over a white *burnous*. As Helen and Cliff approached, the company turned to watch them in some amusement, thereby causing the girl to blush, and making Cliff feel exceedingly self-conscious. Even the *inkoosiezana*, semi-savage though she was, seemed to sense the air of romance about the two. Her eyes gleamed strangely, and she looked closely at the man and woman as they drew near.

"The *inkoosiezana* has come to accompany her guests to the great war dance of the *impies*," Van der Merwe said aloud to the American. Then, in an aside, he added in English:

"You are her official bodyguard—or jailer! The moment anything occurs that seems suspicious, I'll take off my hat, which will be your cue to cover the *inkoosiezana* with your gun. Understand?"

The American nodded.

"O. K. I won't let her out of my sight. She sure looks good, with that narrow band of gold around her forehead and those gold beads around her throat. She's too beautiful a woman to waste her life among those Ama-layta. Say, Van, why don't you start in and make love to her? It's about time for you to settle down and get married, you know!"

The big Boer cast a frosty eye on his companion.

"None of your smart cracks, Yankee!" he growled. "This is no time for funny business. Just keep your eye and gun on the *inkoosiezana*, and remember that not only your life, but also that of Miss Chandler depends on your watchfulness."

With this parting shot he turned on his heel.

Cliff adroitly managed to take his place beside the *inkoosiezana*. As they walked along between the crumbling walls of the ruin, he stole a glance at her. The chieftainess appeared to be under a severe strain. Several times he saw her hand feel nervously for the clasp of crudely worked gold that held the *burnous* around her shapely throat. From time to time she looked sidewise at the American, and at last suddenly asked a question—

"Tell me, *umganaam*, how it is that thou and those with thee came to the country of the Ama-layta?"

Here was a frontal attack, which Cliff hardly knew how to parry. It would never do, he felt, to say that they had come to seek the gold that was now in her possession. His answer was lame enough.

"How came we hither, Inkoosiezana? Oh, across the great *manzi*, in boats."

She glanced sharply at him, as if suspecting an attempt at sarcasm. Whatever it was that she read in his face seemed to placate the *inkoosiezana*. At least, she laughed outright, and Cliff had to admit that her laughter sounded like that of any other amused girl, and not at all like the despotic ruler of a savage tribe. The sound attracted the attention of Helen Chandler, who was walking a few paces in advance with her brother, and caused her to look around in surprise.

"Oh, I see, across the great *manzi!*" the *inkoosiezana* mocked. "Nay, I am glad to hear it! I had thought mayhap thou didst ride into my country on the backs of the fleet footed Oribi or Sassabie. But my question was not how camest thou,

but why? For what purpose?" She waited.

But Cliff had recovered from his surprise and was able to answer in his usual offhand manner.

"Inkoosiezana, we are hunters, and seekers of rare things. The great tribe of the *umlungu*, to which we belong, are restless ever. They hunt, trek and explore over the face of the earth, of which, Inkoosiezana, the land of thy people is but a small part. And most of the earth, be it said, Inkoosiezana, belongs to those white nations whose blood floweth even in thy veins!"

It was a bold and dangerous stroke, this appeal to the white blood which undoubtedly was part of her own heritage. She raised her eyes and looked thoughtfully at the American.

"*Umganaam*, thine eyes have not deceived thee. In truth, the blood of the *umlungu* is in my veins. Yet, my heart is of those people yonder, and I am Amalayta of the Ama-layta!"

She stretched out a bare arm, circled with a red gold bracelet. They had gained a small eminence, overlooking a plain. Close by stood an immense *intombe* tree, but otherwise the veldt was almost clear of bush.

THE AMERICAN looked. At the first glance, the veldt appeared covered with thousands of reddish white *impala*, or *springbok*, mingled with as many heads of ostrich. Then, shading his eyes from the glare of the sun, he looked again and at last distinguished the serried ranks of thousands of warriors. Shield to shield they stood, and it was the skin covering of their shields that created the effect of a great herd of African antelopes. As for ostriches, the magnificent feather headdress of the fighting *kehlas* caused this part of the illusion. Yet, what gave the assemblage a particularly weird tone was the utter immobility of these thousands of fighting men, whose ebony black faces were almost hidden under the huge feather headdresses. In fact, the flutter of ostrich feathers in the breeze was the only movement visible in the great phalanx.

The knoll on which they stood was the reviewing stand. Here the other members of the expedition had also halted. Several tall, ringed men, covered with leopard *karosses*, as worn by the *indunas*, or chieftains in command of *impies*, stood here awaiting the *inkoosiezana*. To them she spoke briefly, whereupon there stood forth a tall *induna*, a middle aged man well over six feet and broad in proportion, with hair graying at the temples. Lifting his shield in his left hand, he shook an assagai with his right. Then he called, in a voice that rolled across the veldt until it reechoed from the wall of shields:

"*Mayihlome! Mayihlome!*"

Van der Merwe, who had edged close to Cliff and the *inkoosiezana*, whispered—

"Know what that means, Yankee?"

Cliff shook his head.

"Search me!"

"It means to arms. The famous war call of the Zulus. They generally shout it from the top of the *kopjes*, one messenger relaying it to another, until they raise the whole country. Don't forget, boy, stick close to the *inkoosiezana*. It's our only chance of salvation. We've got to hold her as a hostage."

While the Boer was speaking, there had been a deep silence on the part of the *impies*. Now, suddenly, the great gathering came to life. Shields were raised and assagais flashed. The flat of the blades beat on taut hides, stretched across shields. Like faraway thunder came a deep throated roar, as the *impies* responded.

"*Mayihlome! Mayihlome!*"

A silence, and the *induna* turned, indicating the *inkoosiezana* with the tip of his spear. Again the *impies* gave voice:

"*Bayete, Inkoosiezana. Bayete, Bayete!*"

"The royal salute," Van der Merwe whispered. "This lady exacts all the deference due to Zulu royalty. I remember seeing a review by Cetewayo, the father of Dinizulu. He was greeted the same way. I was a little shaver at the

time, but have not forgotten. And I never expected to live to see it again. These people are true Zulu, of the same stock that swept Africa in the days of Chaka. It is marvelous."

The war dance had commenced. Back and forth the *impies* swung, one regiment facing another, advancing and retreating as if in actual warfare. Close to one another they rushed, lifting their shields until nothing but thousands of bare legs, lifted in rhythmic unison, were visible below. Down again swept the shields, and out flashed the assagais. The front ranks were but a few yards apart, and spear tip touched spear tip. Then once again they fell away from one another.

Now another *impie*, entirely made up of young men, so young as not yet to be entitled to wear the *kop* ring of the mature warrior, took the center of the stage, while the two other *impies* grounded their shields. This youthful *impie* was armed with assagais and *knob-kiries*, and carried a very small shield, approximately one-third the size of the shields of the older *impies*. The *inkoosiezana*, who had been covertly watching her guests, noted their amazement at this unusual armament. Answering their unspoken question, she explained:

"Ever since the ancient days when our nation became divided, have the young men of the Ama-layta been thus armed. Until a *kehla* has shown himself worthy of wearing the ring of manhood about his brows, he is not permitted to protect his body with the large shield which the elder *impies* yonder are provided with. These small shields will only ward off the thrust of an enemy spear directed at the stomach. Thus do they learn to carry the battle to the foe, and become invincible in war."

She glanced at Van der Merwe, and the tall Boer inclined his head.

"True enough, Inkoosiezana," he said. "And when thy nation became divided, many of the tribes traveled south, far beyond the Smoke That Thunders. They were led by Chaka, of whom thou hast heard? It may be of interest to thee to hear that Chaka's young men were also armed thus—with small shields that hardly protect the stomach, and with the long assagais that reach the enemy!"

The *inkoosiezana* stared at him.

"Thou knowest the story of Chaka—him of the royal blood who marched beyond the Smoke That Thunders? Tell me, does his seed still rule the land?"

The Boer shook his head.

"Nay, Inkoosiezana. Chaka's sons were dispersed like the tassels of the mealie plants in the storm! For they met the sons of the white men, who were armed with weapons that spoke, as do ours, with the voice of thunder. And their *impies* were destroyed on the banks of a river, the waters of which ran red with blood."

The Boer's voice was full of a meaning which was not lost on the *inkoosiezana*. Her eyes flamed, and her voice shook with passion as she replied—

"Then, *umlungu*, it seems to me that Chaka's sons should be avenged some day upon those that brought about this fate!"

She said no more, but once again gazed on the *impies*.

"Are you crazy?" Cliff whispered to the Boer. "Deliberately goading her, that's what you're doing."

VAN DER MERWE shrugged his shoulders.

"Just trying to call her hand. Thought a warning, even at the eleventh hour, might do some good. Maybe you've not noticed it, but that *impie* of young warriors has got considerably nearer to us. See—they are beginning to rush in and out, stabbing with their assagais. Play acting, perhaps, yet they are slowly coming closer and closer, stabbing as they come. If they keep it up, they'll be but a few yards off in a couple of minutes. Then—a last rush, a last stab, and they'll be in among us. By the way, the *inkoosiezana* seems to be moving gradually away from us. Also, the *indunas* that stood with us seem to have withdrawn. Here, quick,

after her! She's going to run for it!"

It was true. The *inkoosiezana* had been slowly working her way to the edge of the little group. Turning her head ever so slightly, she saw that her ruse was discovered, and that the white men were watching. So she started to run, gathering up the wide folds of her *kaross*. There was no longer any doubt—she had planned all along to isolate the little group on the knoll, leaving them to meet their fate at the assagais of the murderous *impie* as it danced on and on, slowly working forward.

She had almost succeeded, when, with a speed that surprised his companions, Cliff dashed after her. She tried to run faster, but, in so doing, dropped the folds of her *kaross*, stumbled and almost fell. Cliff's hand shot out, steadying her.

"Here, let me help you, lady," he shouted in English. "Better come back with me before you get hurt." He tried to drag her with him, but she turned, clawing at his face like a leopard.

"Hate to use force with a woman," Cliff panted. "If you won't come quietly I'll have to carry you."

He gathered her in his arms. Kicking and scratching like a *meerkat*, she struck him across the face with her open hand, drawing the blood from his lips. Then, as he carried her, a volley of rifle and pistol shots broke from the little group of whites on the knoll.

The signal to fire had been given by Van der Merwe to stem the onrush of the *impie*, for the *kehlas*, seeing their *inkoosiezana* struggling in the arms of the *umlungu*, were ready to charge in earnest. The volley, fired well over their heads, momentarily served to stem the attack. Then, as the assagais were leveled once again, the warriors saw that which halted them in their tracks.

A few paces in front of the little group on the knoll stood the *inkoosiezana*. A long braid of her jet black hair was entwined in the fist of the tall leader of the *umlungu*. With the other hand the white giant gripped the handle of his shining *jachtmes*. The *inkoosiezana's* face was turned away from her people, and the sharp, narrow bladed knife pointed straight at her heart.

The *impie* stood as if turned to stone, assagais poised in mid-air.

Now the *induna* in command jumped in front of his men. He barked a staccato order; assagais sank, and shields grounded with a crash. At a sign from Van der Merwe, Satembi stepped forward, and stood beside the Boer and his captive. The white man spoke hurriedly, and Satembi, like all Zulus, a master orator, commenced to harangue his lost kindred. His address was flowery and grandiloquent in the extreme, but from it the gaping warriors gathered that the slightest move on their part would immediately result in death for their ruler. The *impie*, Satembi commanded haughtily, was to keep its distance from the whites as the latter, with the *inkoosiezana* for a hostage, returned to the fortress. As long as the *umlungu* were not molested, no harm would befall the *inkoosiezana*. Then, before the muddled warriors could collect their wits, the whites began to retreat slowly, Cliff carrying the *inkoosiezana*, who was faint with rage and mortification.

The *impies* followed, slowly, doubtfully, and crestfallen, in all the brave panoply of war—but utterly at a loss.

In this manner the whites at last gained the protection of the ancient fortress. Here, Chandler with his machine gun was posted at the entrance. His orders were to shoot at the first sign of attack.

"So far, so good," exclaimed Van der Merwe. "You, Cliff, and you, Miss Chandler, will take the *inkoosiezana* into her *kaya*. The place seems clear of everybody but ourselves. Don't let her give you the slip. She may know of some other way out of this place, and it would never do to lose her. And, when you hear any shooting, you'd better come running. But whatever you do, don't leave the *inkoosiezana*."

Thus, closely guarded by Helen and Cliff, the *inkoosiezana* reached the *kaya*. She entered her quarters without having

spoken a word to her captors on the way.

"Well, that's taken the wind out of her sails!" Cliff remarked. "Yet, I hated having to treat her like that. And Van certainly did not handle her any too gently, dragging her out in front of the *impie*, and making believe he was going to knife her. Still, it was the only way."

Helen nodded.

"Yes, there was no alternative. Still I feel almost sorry for the poor thing. To be publicly humiliated in the eyes of her entire tribe must be terrible to her."

They had seated themselves on a flat *klip* that served as a bench in front of the *kaya*. Presently it occurred to Helen that their companions, standing guard at the gateway, had not eaten since morning.

She, therefore, volunteered to take them some food and a gourd of water from the nearby well. In the meantime Cliff was to guard the captive.

THE GIRL approached the well and began to lower one of the leather buckets, fastened to a long strip of hippo leather. Cliff watched as she leaned over the side of the well. Suddenly she screamed, then turned and fled.

"The Ama-layta—they're climbing up from the well!" she screamed.

Cliff stood nailed to the spot with amazement. What on earth was the matter? Then he saw, first one, and then two, feather headdresses appear above the stone coping of the well. The Ama-layta! Now they dashed over the side and raced after the girl, who was but a few paces ahead.

Cliff ran toward her, shooting as he came. Down went the foremost of the warriors. But already two more were climbing over the coping. Now the American had reached the girl.

"Run!" he shouted. "I'll hold them. Call the others."

For a second she hesitated, then ran on. Now he was face to face with a huge *kehla* whose oiled head ring glistened in the sun. The fellow lunged at him with his assagai, and the American brought him low with the last shot from his revolver. But now the other warriors were upon him, and there was no time to reload. This was the end! An assagai gleamed before his eyes, and something struck him a terrific blow on the back of the head. Down he went—into darkness.

He came to in utter darkness, with an unbearable headache. He opened his eyes, but could see nothing. The mere process of thinking was impossible. Preposterous visions of black savages climbing out of wells flashed through his throbbing head, and faded. He again became unconscious.

When he awoke there was a dim twilight. He could now make out his surroundings. A native hut, no doubt, for the walls bulged out from the top, and the opening, through which came an uncertain light, was but half the height of an ordinary entrance. And presently there came the sound of voices speaking in a native tongue. He was a prisoner of the Ama-layta! There had been a fight at the well, he remembered. What had become of the others?

He must know the worst; he called aloud. The voices stopped. Again he called, but there was no answer. He tried to crawl to the doorway, but gave up. His head felt too heavy for his body.

Then he heard a light step. Some one was bending over him. Instinctively Cliff raised an arm in defense. A low laugh caused him to look up.

Brilliant eyes looked down into his, out of an ivory pale face, framed in a mass of black hair. It was the *inkoosiezana*. Suddenly she pressed closer, until her lips brushed his. Then, with a mocking laugh that yet seemed to have a strange touch of tenderness, she drew away. For an embarrassed minute, Cliff did not speak. Then he roused himself to ask what had occurred. She answered readily enough.

"Thou art my prisoner, even as, awhile ago, I was thine. And, besides, thou owest me a great deal—life itself!"

That dull pain in his forehead seemed to make logical thought impossible. He muttered—

"Where are the others?"

The *inkoosiezana* laughed.

"Ah, thou didst not know the secret passage, below the walls of the ancient place! Its entrance lies just above the well's water level. Fortunately, my people had not forgotten! But only a few could pass at a time, and for that reason they were unable to enter in force and slay those who had dared to carry off the *inkoosiezana*. As for thee, my friend, the warriors would have plunged their sharp assagais into thy flesh, had not I, coming from behind, struck thee over the head. Even then the warriors would have killed, but I had a strange thought! Knowest thou my whim? It was that I should save one of my own blood; moreover, one who had dared to lay his hands on me. That, *umganaam*, is something no other man ever did. Thus the assagais were stayed, and we lowered thee into the passage. It was perilous work, and thy friends, the other *umlungu*, almost made a rescue. But we got safely away, though one of our men, in lowering thee, lost his footing and was drowned.

"As for thyself, *umganaam*, I do not know what I shall do with thee." There now was an ominous ring to her words. She rose abruptly. "Meantime, thou needest food. There is a guard about the *kaya*, and no hope of escape."

Noiselessly she departed, bending low to pass through the low doorway.

Left alone, the white man groaned. So that was it! The tables had been turned with a vengeance. The Ama-layta now had a hostage of their own. He was that hostage, and his friends were caught like mice in a trap. They must either come out and battle their way through the *impies*, or stand a siege that could have but one ending. In the meantime, what was the outlook for him?

His thoughts reverted to the *inkoosiezana*. Great guns, the woman had actually kissed him. The old cat-and-mouse game! The she-devil! Purring over him! He thought of Dirks's definition of the *inkoosiezana*—a hell cat. Well, if she thought to strike terror to his soul, she had another think coming.

He sat up and felt through his pockets. Well, at any rate, they had not taken his pipe and tobacco. He searched and found a few matches.

At that moment a young boy entered the *kaya* carrying a gourd of *maas* and a platter containing a roasted ear of mealies and some boiled goat flesh. The boy looked at the white man with eyes big with wonder, then hastily withdrew.

Cliff did not relish the thought of food, but the curdled milk looked good. He drank every drop of it. He felt a lot better, and was anxious to have another talk with the *inkoosiezana*, or anybody, for that matter. But no one came near. Gradually the patch of light in the doorway darkened, and soon the interior of the hut became pitch black. Though having no idea of time, he assumed that the second day of his captivity had passed. Nothing much would happen during the night; anyhow he stood just as much chance of being assagaied then as during the day. So thinking, the American made himself as comfortable as possible on his heap of *karosses*, and was soon fast asleep.

VI

HE WAS awakened by a fusillade of shots. They came too rapidly for rifle fire. It could mean only one thing—the machine gun! Were the handful in the fortress making a sortie? He dashed to the doorway but came to a dead stop with the point of a broad bladed assagai within an inch of his throat. Whatever was happening on the outside, somebody was standing guard over him; and that somebody was not being stampeded by the shooting. Already the angry rattle of the machine gun was slackening, then died away altogether. Evidently the sortie, if such it had been, was halted. His own rôle, it

was evident, was to be a waiting one.

However, he did not have to wait long. A tall form entered the *kaya*, and Cliff recognized one of the *indunas* who had led the war dance. The chief came to the point without any superfluous talk or ceremony.

"*Inkoos*, I am sent by the *inkoosiezana*. She awaits thee without." He turned and led the way from the room.

Cliff emerged into dazzling daylight. For a second he stood blinded, so sudden was the transition from dark to light. Then he followed the guide to a large square building, fronting an open square, in the center of which the *impie* of the young men, armed with their ridiculously inadequate shields, stood drawn up. In front of the *impie* he now discerned a row of crude stretchers, on each of which reposed what appeared to be a body, covered with a *kaross*.

A horrible fear clutched at the white man's heart. Whose were those *kaross* covered forms? Had the Ama-layta carried the ruin by assault; was that the meaning of the shooting he had heard?

The *inkoosiezana* appeared presently, stepping lightly from the doorway of the central structure. Royally she advanced, holding the hem of her magnificent leopard skin as daintily as if it had been a Parisian gown. Coming close to the American, she pointed silently at the gruesome line of stretchers. He looked and was horrified to see a thin trickle of blood spreading from several of the litters over the stony ground.

Still the *inkoosiezana* stood silent—a consummate actress, making the most of a dramatic situation. At last she spoke.

"*Umganaam*, knowest thou who these are? But lately they were full of life and had no thought of death—now they are silent for all time. Wouldst thou look upon the face of death?"

Faint, rocking on his feet, the white man closed his eyes. Those were the bodies of his companions! Which was that of the girl he loved; what *karosses* covered the great form of Van der Merwe, staunch companion on many a hunting trip, and that of the gay and irresponsible Van Wyk?

Mustering all his will power, he regained an outward semblance of self-control. He must show the renegade white woman and her Zulu tribesmen that white men knew how to die with their fellows. Presently he heard some one speak, and hardly knew it was himself!

"I have no fear to behold death." All the *impie* could hear. "Turn back those *karosses!*"

At a signal from the *induna*, some of the warriors stepped from the front ranks. With a sudden movement the *karosses* were thrown back. There, stark and rigid, flat on their backs, lay the dead bodies of eight Ama-layta warriors.

It was gruesome enough, but the sight left the white man unmoved. Those moments of fearful anxiety had passed—Helen and her companions were still unharmed. He squared his shoulders and looked calmly at the phalanx of plumed, black warriors confronting him.

The *inkoosiezana* at last broke the silence.

"Behold, *umganaam!* These young men of the Ama-layta have suffered death at the hands of the white men yonder! Their blood calls for vengeance. My *indunas* demand that I avenge those victims of treachery, and of violation of our ancient hospitality, through thee!"

She stopped, as if to study the impression her words had made. But the threat seemed to have but little effect on this *umlungu*, who looked as unconcerned as on the day she had first set eyes on him. Personal danger seemed to mean nothing to this strange captive. Instead, he appeared curiously light hearted and replied indifferently enough:

"Thou hast spoken, Inkoosiezana. So be it! Yet—the treachery of which thou speakest was not ours. We knew well whose death was plotted in the midst of the *impies*, as they danced the war dance on the veldt. We, the white men, were too swift for thee and thine, that's all. As for these dead men—the *umlungu*

came to seek peace, not war. Those dead warriors met their fate this morning, as they marched against the thunder of the white men. And, be thou assured of one other matter—this far reaching thunder of the *umlungu* will yet avenge my death, if I should fall beneath the of assagais thy warriors."

Here was too great a defiance, too much of a strain on the immature discipline of the youthful warriors. A shout to kill rent the air, and for a second it seemed that the white man would pay for his daring then and there.

The *inkoosiezana* lifted her hand, and the shouting died away.

"When the sun rises again," she announced, "thou wilt be led before the wall of the ancient place. There the fathers and the brothers of those *kehlas* who were slain this morning shall slaughter thee like an ox, with their assagais. From afar the other white men, and the white woman, will watch thee die.

"Furthermore, know this! I will not order another attack. My *indunas*, the fools, would have me fling my men against that far reaching thunder of which thou speakest. I know a better way! Only this morning did some of my warriors crawl on their bellies through the narrow way beneath the ancient place, dragging with them the carrion of a dead sheep. This they threw into the well, thereby poisoning the water. How long, thinkest thou, will thy friends remain within the fortress?"

She laughed jeeringly and turned away. The chief *induna* issued a brief order, and several warriors closed on the captive, and led him back to his *kaya*.

IN THE darkness of the hut, Cliff gave way to despair. He did not in the least doubt the woman's story of the poisoning of the well. His companions were doomed as was he.

For several hours he tormented his brain, thinking of avenues of escape. Suppose he rushed out into the night? But he was unarmed, and it was certain that the hut was guarded by more than one warrior.

Suddenly he knew that he was no longer alone. Something was moving about in the darkness. Now it was beside him. And then a whispering voice:

"Art awake, *umganaam?* Speak softly."

The American was too astonished to answer. The *inkoosiezana* again! At last he replied, grimly, but in a low voice:

"Aye, Inkoosiezana, I am awake. Thou knowest men that die in the morning hardly ever sleep soundly."

A sound of subdued laughter reached him. She had come to torment him again! Dirks had been right in calling her a devil incarnate.

"*Umganaam*, I have come to aid thee!"

He felt her hand reach out for him in the darkness. It rested on his shoulder, then moved caressingly downward and touched his hand.

Cliff remained motionless. What new game was this?

"Thou dost not answer. In truth I am here to help thee. This day, before the *impie*, I could do naught but threaten death. Tonight I give thee life."

Still the white man did not speak. Things were happening too fast! He heard a faint sigh.

"My lips touched thine last night, *umganaam!* Was it because thou art of my blood, that I seem to feel for thee something of that which the white woman, who sleeps tonight beyond the walls, carries in her heart? I am unversed in the ways of love, *umganaam*, and the *inkoosiezana* and priestess of the Ama-layta will die unwed. Still, I am a woman, and thou art the only man that could ever stir me to love. Yet, I am my own master first, and for thee there is no place in my life—not even wert thou willing, for my sake, to give up the white woman yonder. But I can not suffer my warriors—those fierce young leopards—to plunge their assagais into thy breast as I have threatened.

"Oh, I have thought this matter over all this day. I have battled with myself.

and have conquered. Thou shalt go unharmed, and so shall thy friends. Thy life I give to the white woman."

Cliff at last began to believe.

"Inkoosiezana," he said, deeply moved, "with all my heart I thank—"

Her small hand stole to his face, lingered there caressingly for a second, then was pressed firmly over his mouth.

"Do not thank me, *umganaam*. Hear my plan. There is no guard beyond this *kaya* now. I have seen to that, and tomorrow some one will pay for this oversight, when it is reported to the *inkoosiezana* that the captive *umlungu* is fled. Therefore thou art free to leave this place now. But tread warily, for beyond the *kraal*, where the rise begins toward the ancient place, the guards are stationed. Crawl a little beyond those guards to the place marked with the big, white *klip*. Thou canst not miss it, for it glistens in the darkness. Beyond this rock grows the tall *tamboekie* grass, and it will be easy for thee to crawl through it, close to the wall of the ancient place. From there on, thou must trust to fortune, so that the *umlungus*, thy friends, will not kill thee with their weapons, for they keep a good watch.

"In the morning, after thou hast rejoined those within the fortress, and when it is seen that thou hast escaped, there will be a great commotion in the *kraal* of the Ama-layta. Then the tall man, thy leader with the long beard, must demand a parley. He must offer to leave the land of the Ama-layta immediately. To this I will agree, saying to my *indunas* that it would be madness to fight against the thunder of the *umlungu*, seeing that they will leave and never return. They will listen to my words, for the older warriors are not eager for another battle, and hold that already too many men have been lost. Thus thou wilt be allowed to depart in peace. Come!"

She took his hand and led him to the doorway. Suddenly, with utter abandon, she threw her arm around his head and pressed her lips to his. Releasing him, she stepped back and whispered:

"Farewell, *umganaam*. Do not speak, and walk carefully."

The next instant she had disappeared, and he was alone in the dark and silent *kraal*. Stooping low and dropping to his hands and knees at the slightest sound, the white man crawled from one beehive hut to another. He dreaded to arouse any of the huge, spotted native dogs that are so plentiful in all the Bantu *kraals*. However, the native custom of allowing the dogs to sleep in the huts, together with the rest of the family, stood him in good stead, and he at last got clear of the *kraal* and began to move rapidly toward the plateau on which the ancient place was located. After proceeding for about half a mile, he heard the sound of voices. Evidently those were the Ama-layta guards of whom the *inkoosiezana* had spoken. Going down once more on hands and knees, he crawled some distance to the right. A little way ahead, a tall, white *klip*, or rock, loomed up like a huge phantom, and beyond this stretched the waving *tamboekie* grass, straddling the hillside to the plateau above.

Bending low, he entered the grass. Somehow, he dreaded this field of *tamboekie* more than he had feared the *kraal* itself. What if he should run into an Ama-layta scout, lying hidden. Or if he stepped on a *mamba*? He knew the predilection of the African cobra for the *tamboekie*, and was also aware that this snake does not always hole up for the night, but frequently coils in the open. Cold chills raced down his back at the thought.

The past few days had played the very mischief with his nerves, he told himself.

THUS he advanced warily, foot by foot. At last, just as he was beginning to doubt whether he had taken the right direction, the *tamboekie* began to thin out, and there, straight ahead, loomed the high walls of the ruin. The entrance should be a little to the left, he thought,

and crawled in that direction. Suddenly he again heard voices. Straining his ears to catch the subdued sound, he now recognized Van der Merwe's heavy rumble. Good old Van! Try as he would, he could never lower that heavy bass of his. It was the sweetest music the American had ever heard. But how to attract their attention?

He did not want to call out. He had it —that Yankee tune he had taught his Boer companions! "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean." He started whistling softly. The talking stopped, and then he heard Van Wyk's voice, raised to a high pitch of excitement.

"*Allemachtig!* Did you hear that!" Then came Van der Merwe's voice—

"*Wiedaar?* Is it you, Cliff?"

The American threw caution to the winds.

"Yes," he cried, jumping to his feet, "it's me and I'm making a run for it. Don't shoot!"

In his best football style, he dashed from cover, expecting to hear the assagais go whizzing by. But, either the Ama-layta guards were lying farther away in the *tamboekie*, or they had been taken by surprise. Nothing happened, and the next minute Cliff was almost lifted off his feet as the two Boers grabbed his arms and dragged him into the shelter of the ruin. The entire party was encamped at this spot, he found, and now Chandler, Dirks, the two Zulus and the Hottentot, crowded around him, asking a thousand questions. Then Helen, who had been resting on a bundle of *karosses* spread just inside the corridor, approached. She did not speak, but the look in her eyes and the clasp of her hand, carried such meaning that the others stood back and left the two to themselves for one of those brief minutes that are remembered a lifetime.

Briefly he told them his story, and the plans of the *inkoosiezana*. Van der Merwe nodded. Yes, that was the way out. In the morning he would borrow Satembi's assagai and shield. The assagai he would stick, blade down, in the ground, and from its shaft suspend the shield. Those, he explained, were tokens universally understood among the Bantu, signifying that a parley was desired between warring factions.

All seemed settled, when suddenly Dirks commenced to raise various objections, in a loud and quarrelsome manner.

"How about the gold?" he wanted to know.

Surely after all those hardships they did not intend to return with empty hands! It was all a scheme of the *inkoosiezana's*, he declared vehemently, to draw them into the open and overwhelm them with her *impies*. He was in favor of rejecting, unconditionally, any thought of an armistice. He, for one, had an old score to settle with the Ama-layta and their chieftainess, and did not intend to leave the country without a fight, nor would he let the savages keep the gold.

In vain did Cliff explain that the *inkoosiezana* had indubitably saved his life, and vainly did he express the conviction that she had suffered a change of heart. Dirks continued to curse and rave until, at last, Van der Merwe laid a huge hand on his shoulder, saying:

"Listen to me! We intend to accept the *inkoosiezana's* terms, and may thank our lucky stars to get out of this country with our lives. Why, man, she holds us in the hollow of her hand! You know we can not hold out another day, with not a drop of water to drink from that poisoned well. As to the gold, it is ridiculous to think of it any longer. We will owe the *inkoosiezana* a debt of gratitude to let us depart alive, as things are. And now I don't want to hear another word from you, understand?"

The big Boer looked so threatening that Dirks slunk away, muttering to himself. Van Wyk shook his head.

"There's something wrong with that fellow," he said, "and I'm afraid we'll yet have trouble with him before this trip is over. He sits brooding by himself all the time. I think he's a little queer in the head."

During the remainder of the night

there was no more sleep for the expedition. Excitement ran high when, soon after sunrise, Satembi walked unconcernedly into the open and planted his assagai in the ground, for all the Ama-layta to behold. Then they watched anxiously, but for a while not one of the tribesmen showed himself.

At last a large gathering of people was seen approaching from the direction of the *kraal*. In front walked a small group, one of whom, dressed in white *burnous* and silver jackal *kaross*, they instantly recognized as the *inkoosiezana*. She was accompanied by two women and six *indunas*. Behind this group, marching with the peculiar Bantu shuffle, came a full *impie* of *kehlas*, or mature warriors, carrying large shields and assagais. Evidently the regiment of young men had been left at the *kraal*, on this occasion.

The *impie* came to a halt at some distance from the walls of the ruin, but the *inkoosiezana* and her immediate following advanced to the spot marked by Satembi's assagai and shield. Led by Van der Merwe, the white men now emerged from the fortress, and advanced to meet her.

The chieftainess came to the point immediately. For an instant she looked meaningly at the young American, then she turned to Van der Merwe.

"Thou hast asked for an *indaba*—meeting?"

"I have, Inkoosiezana," the Boer answered. "And I thank thee for granting it."

She nodded.

"Why hast thou asked this *indaba*? Art ready to surrender?"

The Boer shook his head.

"Nay, Inkoosiezana, that we are not. We desire to make thee a proposal. It is this: suffer us to depart in peace. We will leave thy country this very day, never to return. Thus will the lives of men be saved—our lives, and the lives of thy men. Therefore, I say, let us have peace, and we shall depart this instant. I have spoken."

The *inkoosiezana* looked at her *indunas*, as if to see what they thought of the white man's proposal. The chiefs, grave and middle aged men, appeared impressed. She beckoned them to come close, and spoke in an undertone. One or two of the chiefs replied, whereupon she turned again to the whites.

"My counselors find there is wisdom in thy words, *umganaam*. It is well. Thou shalt leave this land unharmed this very day, and peace go with thee! Farewell!"

She raised her hand in the royal salute, but her eyes sought out the American. Wistfully she looked at him. The whites returned her salute:

"*Bayete, Inkoosiezana - y - Ama - layta. Bayete!*"

And then came tragedy, stark and unexpected. From the midst of the little group of white men cracked a rifle! At the sound, the *inkoosiezana* stood still. Her hands clutched at her bosom; she swayed slightly, then slowly sank to the ground.

The thing was so unbelievable, it had happened so suddenly, that both the whites and the Ama-layta were stricken motionless. But now one white man ran back to the ancient place, waving his rifle above his head and crying aloud in insane exultation. It was Dirks.

A ROAR arose from the ranks of the *impie*, and the *indunas*, gathering around their fallen chieftainess, raised their assagais. Cliff, unarmed, and unheeding, dashed through the group of *indunas* and knelt by the dying *inkoosiezana*. Suddenly the shouting died away, and Cliff, turning his head, was in time to see Van der Merwe stand out from the crowd, for all the Ama-layta nation to behold, and deliberately take aim at the fleeing murderer. Almost had Dirks gained the protection of the gateway, when the Boer's rifle spoke. Dirks threw up his arms, stumbled forward, then crashed to the ground. The Ama-layta had seen a white man mete out white men's justice to one of his own kind!

The *inkoosiezana*, her head pillowed on Cliff's breast, had also seen and under-

stood. Dying, she raised her arm until it encircled the white man's head. And, as he gently lowered her still form, there was a smile on her lips.

One of the *indunas*, an elderly man, had taken command. At his direction the body of the *inkoosiezana* was placed on a stretcher of shields, and covered with her own silver jackal *kaross*. The old chief addressed Van der Merwe:

"Lord," he said, "we have seen thy justice, and it is well! Ere the *inkoosiezana* closed her eyes in death, didst thou smite her slayer. Therefore, it is written that we, the *indunas* of the Ama-layta, will carry out the pact agreed to by the *inkoosiezana*. Depart in peace, not one assagai will be lifted to stay thee!"

The *induna* turned and slowly followed the procession of warriors bearing the body of the slain chieftainess.

Van der Merwe placed a kindly hand on Cliff's shoulder. The American seemed dazed.

"Come along," the Boer said, "there's much to be done. We've got to get out of this immediately, before they change their minds. Those *indunas* may find it difficult to persuade the rest of the tribe not to interfere."

Helen, who had been a horror stricken spectator of the drama, quietly approached. Without a word she slipped her arm through Cliff's, and together they returned to the fortress.

They were gathering their belongings when Chandler, who had remained at the gateway, sent Umjala to say that a messenger had come from the *kraal* and desired to speak with the leader of the expedition.

Van der Merwe hurried out. The messenger turned out to be the same *induna* of whom he had but lately taken leave. The two spoke earnestly, and then Van der Merwe rushed back.

"Great news!" he cried.

They gathered around, and he announced that the old *induna* had come to offer them the gold of the altar. The Ama-layta did not want it, the old fellow had said. It had brought bad luck to the tribe, resulting in the death of many warriors and in that of the *inkoosiezana*. Therefore, the Ama-layta felt that, in offering the gold to the white men, they were removing a powerful curse from the entire tribe.

"Naturally, I accepted," Van der Merwe said, his face beaming. "I also told them we could not possibly carry all the stuff, so they offered to send some men with us to pack it through the swamp, and they are giving us one of their boats, in addition to our own."

His face grew somber.

"May the Lord forgive me for shooting that poor devil, Dirks! But he was a cold blooded murderer and placed all our lives in jeopardy!"

Van Wyk patted him on the back.

"Don't let that worry you. It was bushveldt law, you know."

The native carriers arrived within the next hour, leading half a dozen longhorn native oxen. From the backs of these patient animals a number of palm leaf baskets were suspended. The carriers immediately began dismantling the golden altar. This proved an easy task, for the bars of gold were not cemented together, but had simply been placed one on top of the other, until they formed the huge square block.

The oxen being loaded, the expedition immediately got under way on the long trek to the seaboard. The swamp was reached around the noon hour, and here the Ama-layta guides led the way to a broader causeway than the one over which they had entered. The distance, also, proved much shorter, and night had not yet fallen when they at last emerged from the morass. Some time was lost in locating their boat, but at last it was found, tucked away safely in a half drowned clump of bush. Nearby, the Ama-layta had a mooring place for one of their own narrow boats. The oxen were now relieved of their load, and the gold packed in the two boats. Satembi, Umjala and Hendrik were placed in charge of the native boat, the whites occupying their own vessel.

Darkness had now fallen, and it was decided to keep rowing throughout the night, as no hostile encounter need be feared. The Ama-layta guides were dismissed, and their hearts gladdened with presents of hunting knives, pipes, tobacco, and what-not, Chandler even going so far as to bestow a pocket comb and mirror, and a silver cigaret case on the leader of the guides. A neat little vanity was sacrificed to the same good cause by his sister.

No further meetings with warlike hippos, crocodiles or other denizens of the stream took place during the night. The two boats kept close together and, going downstream, made such excellent progress that the sun had hardly risen before they shot out from the river's mouth into the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean. Here they rested on their oars for some time, after firing several shots to draw the attention of the schooner which was seen cruising some four miles away. Captain Machado, cautious soul, had evidently been taking no chances by standing in too close to the shore at any time.

THE HALFBREED skipper's face was a study as he looked over the side of his vessel into the two boats and saw their cargo. But he lent a willing hand and worked like a stevedore himself, stowing the stuff away.

The ship's boat having been taken aboard, the schooner now turned her bow south. Following a short discussion, it was decided that Durban, Union of South Africa, and not Delagoa Bay, in Portuguese East Africa, would be their destination. They had no illusions as to what would become of their cargo of gold at the hands of the Mozambique authorities. And then, there was that little, fat Portuguese port officer to be reckoned with. No doubt he was keeping a vindictive watch on the quay wall of Delagoa.

It was smooth sailing over a deep blue ocean all the way to Port Natal and Durban. Cliff and Helen spent most of their time together and, when the towering bluff and the breakwater of Durban at last came into view, they had laid all their plans. Thus it happened that, when the party arrived at the Marine Hotel on the Esplanade, the American and the girl were both missing. Somewhere near West Street they had given their companions the slip. At last a rickshaw, pulled by a burly Zulu, drew up in front of the hotel.

"Where the deuce did you two go . . . ?" the girl's brother began, then, reading something in their faces, became silent.

"Hurrah! They are married!" Van Wyk cried, and in a moment the two were the center of a joyous, handshaking throng.

The next day a certain official, connected with the South African mint, almost had heart failure when he was asked to assess the value of a small room full of unminted gold. And, in the evening of that same day, amidst the popping of several magnums of a heady Cape wine, a division of treasure took place, to the satisfaction of all concerned. Even Captain Machado and his halfbreed crew were not forgotten.

Cliff asked Satembi and Umjala what they were going to do with their part of the treasure.

"We shall buy many wives and cattle!" the Zulus replied.

The master of the Barrachus was decidedly no gentleman, but then he managed pretty well, as you will have to agree.

CHECKMATE

by ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

THE SKY was a hard blue, unflecked by any cloud. The sea was a sheet of blued steel, motionless, glazed. Far off to starboard the coast of South America was a vague dark line along the horizon. There was no wind and the heat was terrific. The little and ancient steamship *Barrachus* plodded wearily to the north, the foul and greasy smoke from her squat smokestack lying in a heavy wide pall dead astern, casting an uneasy shadow upon the water.

In the shade of the patched awning above the lower bridge Captain Downs rested. He always rested. There were men who declared that roots had spread from his wide stern deep into the withes of the comfortable, long cane chair in which he invariably reposed. He was a

very large and very fat man, dressed this time of the forenoon in pink and white striped cotton pajamas, unbuttoned half way down his hairy chest. In one hand he slowly waved a fan of split banana leaf while the other was lovingly folded round a tall glass in which ice tinkled and lemon peel floated palely yellow. His lips, parted in a sort of genial, half absent smile, were thick and coarse, betraying teeth stained with tobacco juice. His nose was a glorious sunburst, veined with purple. His speech was crude, his manners atrocious, his fat round arms generously tattooed. He was, decidedly, no gentleman, but his worst enemies conceded he was a first class sailor, and an even better pot comrade. As master and owner of the little *Barrachus*, he had done some quite surprising things.

This particular hot and weary morning, two days out from Puayquil, which is renowned for its mines, sins and fevers, Captain Downs was roused out of his placid reveries by a step on the companion that led from the main deck. Soon after there appeared a tall, lean and sallow man with neat black mustaches and rather piercing dark eyes.

"It's hot," said the newcomer with a very polite smile. He spoke excellent English, except for a queer sounding consonant now and then, and he seemed entirely at his ease.

"Damned 'ot," agreed the captain. He surveyed the newcomer lazily and decided he did not like him. He was too smooth, too graciously polite. His name was, as far as Captain Downs knew, Nicholas Martin, but that was probably borrowed. A great many of the passengers the little *Barrachus* picked up for transportation between the coast ports, had borrowed names, and wished only to change their environment as rapidly as possible without too many questions being asked.

"Excuse the intrusion," murmured Nicholas Martin, still smiling.

He dropped unasked into the canvas deck chair opposite the captain, which the mate sometimes sat in when the master of the *Barrachus* requested speech or a drink with him.

"I thought I'd have a chat with you."

" 'Elp yerself," said the captain.

He wondered whether he should offer the other a drink, but decided it was too hot to bellow for the steward. Nicholas Martin produced a handkerchief, all bundled up, and dabbed at his seemingly cool brow with it. He looked very graceful and lithe in his spotless whites, with a cream colored panama hat far back on his head to keep the sun from his neck. Captain Downs sighed and remembered when he too had been lithe and lean and graceful. Long ago, long ago. He blinked once or twice, and stared fish-like at nothing in particular out of watery blue eyes.

"I understand," commenced Nicholas Martin, once he settled himself, "that you are carrying the biggest bullion shipment ever sent from Puayquil. There was some gossip to that effect along the Boca anyway, before we sailed."

"Four 'undred thousand in bar silver," agreed Captain Downs absently. "It's all stacked in me rooms so I c'n 'ardly move about. An' there's near a 'undred thousand in native diamonds an' gold in th' safe. Fat freight."

"Ah," said the other pleasantly. "Quite a lot. But isn't it dangerous to place so much on board a small craft like this, without a strong room or even a wireless?"

"Never thought of it," admitted Captain Downs. "Don't see why. There ain't goin' t' be any risk 'less the old packet founders. Besides, I gotta contrac' with th' mines an' I've carried their stuff afore."

"Very interesting," observed Nicholas Martin.

HE DABBED at his brow again and his eyes grew blank for a moment, as if he were listening. He consulted a gold wrist watch, smiled and then laid the bundled handkerchief in his lap, his sinewy brown hands lightly covering it.

For a fraction of a second the captain's banana leaf fan checked in its waving and the watery blue eyes of the stout man rested upon those hands and the handkerchief beneath. Then with a sigh, as if contented, he allowed the fan to resume its normal swing.

"I was just thinking last night, Captain, how easy it would be to get all this stuff. I had nothing else to do so I worked out several plans. Tell me what you think of this one."

"D'you think it'll work?" asked Captain Downs reflectively. "Y'know a lot things like that 'ave been tried an' it ain't always they—"

"But I'm sure this plan is airtight," protested Nicholas Martin. "Just listen . . . Now, supposing six or seven determined men were to take a passage on this vessel from Puayquil to the next port, a run of five days. Men, say, like myself and your other passengers. You carry a mixed crew and a very small one, easily overpowered. You have two mates, three engineers and yourself, who might put up a resistance. If the prospective attackers awaited the right time, they would be sure to find two of the engineers and one of the mates asleep in their watch below. It would be very easy to lock them in their rooms, supposing the keys had first been obtained. A visit on the part of two of the passengers to the navigation bridge would quite easily dispose of the unsuspecting mate there. The crew would quite obediently retire to the fo'c's'le, if persuaded with a gun or so.

"The ship now being entirely under the attackers' control, what next? As I see it, it would be foolish to be burdened with her as it would be foolish to leave witnesses who might quickly raise an alarm. The logical thing would be to work the vessel in as close to the coast as possible, and then blow a few holes in her, say with a small time bomb or two. The bullion, in the meantime, could be transferred to two of the boats, the other boats being staved in. Of course, a very lonely and barren part of the coast would have to be fixed upon for all this maneuvering, so the crew, after swimming ashore or reaching the beach by other means, would have a great deal of trouble getting in touch with civilization and its annoying telegraphs and gunboats. By the time they succeeded, the bullion would have been landed and the traces covered. Don't you see how simple it all is?"

Captain Downs laid his banana leaf fan carefully in his lap and then finished his drink. He blinked once or twice at Nicholas Martin, smiling and at his ease, and then slowly nodded.

"An' when," he asked pleasantly, "is this to 'appen?"

Nicholas Martin consulted his wrist watch.

"Say in about fifteen minutes."

"Well," said Captain Downs admiringly, "I'm glad it's all peaceable. If there's a thing I 'ate it's trouble."

"I am delighted," said Nicholas Martin. "It's a pleasure to meet a gentleman who agrees with my own views. I wonder if you would care to lay down in your room? No more noise than necessary will be made rearranging the—er—furniture. It may be rather inconvenient for a few hours, as the particular barren and lonely part of the coast I mentioned is to the north of us yet. However, the cook will function as usual and I shall have him prepare a recipe or two of my own for luncheon and dinner."

"Well!" said Captain Downs genially. "Well!"

Nicholas Martin raised his bundled handkerchief again and dabbed at his cool brow, the captain's watery blue eyes following the motion and going strangely blank. After a brief hesitation he smiled again.

"It's 'ot," he grumbled.

He rose from his chair with a prodigious grunt, straightened, yawned, gazed mildly out to sea for a few moments and then waddled into his room.

"Damned hot," agreed Nicholas Martin.

He unwrapped his handkerchief from the neat black automatic it had covered,

mopped his now perspiring brow with the limp cloth and with a sigh of relief, slipped the gun into his side pocket. He glanced at his watch again, and then, producing a silver whistle, gave one sharp blast. There was no following confusion nor any great deal of noise at all. The wheel on the navigation bridge above creaked as it turned over, the engine thump remained steady. A short swarthy man in a gray flannel shirt and stained white pants, with a black woollen scarf for a belt, came up from the main deck, caught Nicholas Martin's eye and nodded briefly. The *Barrachus* was heading for the coast.

A FEW minutes after noon, there was a light kick on the cabin door and the ship's cook entered the room bearing a black tin tray, upon which were the laden plates of a substantial meal. Captain Downs lay in his bunk, perspiring vastly, his pajama jacket unbuttoned to expose his massive breast and stomach, his fat hands gripping an ancient San Francisco newspaper, and a pair of steel rimmed spectacles perched precariously upon his nose. He stared over his spectacle tops when the cook appeared, glanced toward the doorway where lounged the short swarthy man in the gray flannel shirt, a brown paper cigaret between his lips and a large revolver stuck prominently inside his black woolen sash.

"Lunch, sir," said the cook.

He was an ancient baldheaded man, attired merely in a torn white cotton singlet, faded blue dungaree pants and a large stained white apron. He had few remaining snags of teeth so that his jaws were almost of the nutcracker variety, while his nose, broken in some past fight, had a distinct list to port. His throat was scrawny, his tattooed arms scrawny, his voice an irritable rasp.

"Joe," said Captain Downs solemnly, " 'ave you mutineered."

"I been ordered about an' hinsulted," said Joe querulously. "Fine goin's on. Am I a blasted stooard t' lug trays aroun' fer a lot o' dago tripe?"

"Joe," said Captain Downs placidly. "Do you call t' mind th' time we wus caught by them chink pilgrims off the Yangtze?"

Joe set the tray on the captain's desk and turned, half stooped because of his age, wiping his gnarled hands on his apron. The swarthy guard lounged against the door lintel to hear what was said, though his command of English was small. Not that it mattered. Nicholas Martin did not see that any harm could come from a stout and genial old man and an aged cook. The whole plan was airtight.

"Them chinks?" echoed Joe. "Oh, aye . . . Forty years I bin cookin'—fifteen fer you—an' I never 'ad t' act as a stooard afore nor make up grub from a dago's ideas. What I says—"

"You'd better bring me dinner early, Joe," interrupted Captain Downs.

He sat up in his bunk with a groan and a jerk, adjusted his spectacles and stared solemnly at his old cook.

"I'm a-goin' to' get 'ungry about five."

"Oh, aye," said the cook.

He wiped his nose with the back of his hand and nodded and then, without another word, hobbled from the cabin. The swarthy guard blew cigaret smoke contemptuously after him. He turned back to the cabin after a moment or so to discover Captain Downs planted firmly in his swivel chair before the desk, stolidly eating.

It was about three o'clock when Nicholas Martin was summoned from the poop, where he was superintending the stowage of bar silver in the boats. He came to the lower bridge, smiling and pleasant, spoke a few words in a low tone to the guard, and then stepped to the door of the captain's room. Captain Downs was standing before his wash basin, winding a towel tightly about his forearm, which was red with blood. One side of his face was covered with lather, the other side shaved clean. A razor, stained red, with lather on it, was

laying half in the water the basin held.

"Started t' get th' seaweed off," Captain Downs grumbled, "an' then cut meself. I allus strop me razor on me arm an' th' old sow rolled so I gashed pretty deep. I gotta 'ave th' medicine chest an' some bandages. Seems t' me this sentry of yours ought t' be able t' get that without raising all this fuss."

"That's too bad, Captain," said Nicholas Martin with a semblance of concern. "The trouble is, he doesn't understand English very well. And in any case, I told him to send for me if you wanted anything. Where is the medicine chest?"

"Sort of big wooden box," responded the captain, holding his forearm. Blood was already oozing through the towel. "You'll find 'er in th' lower right drawer in th' saloon buffay. 'Ave you got th' keys?"

"I think so," said Nicholas Martin.

HE PRODUCED a large bunch of keys from his pocket and handed them to the guard with a brief order. The man hurried away and Nicholas Martin came into the cabin.

"Would you like me to help you, Captain," he inquired solicitously.

Captain Downs made a magnificent gesture.

"I ain't a kid, mister. Drag that chest up 'ere an' I'll fix things . . . Got quite a slice."

He uncovered his arm enough to show the half suspicious visitor the ugly cut, then wrapped it up again. The guard returned in a few minutes carrying the compact mahogany stained box that was supposed to hold everything for first aid work, and also medicines to treat all possible ills that might befall a deep water man far from a doctor. Nicholas Martin unlocked it, looked through it carefully and then smiled.

"Guns have been hidden in queer places, Captain," he apologized. "We searched your room thoroughly but one never knows. You are sure you can manage?"

"I'll get that sentry of yours t' 'elp me if I can't," grumbled the captain.

The other nodded, spoke briefly to the guard again and then hurried aft. Captain Downs sat heavily in his swivel chair, surveyed the medicine chest and mumbled to himself. He found some mild disinfectant, some lint and bandages and beckoned the guard to help him wind and tie the stuff.

"I might flop on you an' get that gun," observed the captain placidly, "but I ain't no fighting man an' I always 'ate trouble."

The guard scowled and once his services were no longer required, retreated to the doorway again to roll and light another cigaret. If he had been arranging all this affair he would have set this foolish fat man adrift in a boat with the others and so dispensed of the necessity of watching them. Time drowsed along.

A few minutes before five, Joe, the cook, appeared once more with his laden tray and many querulous complaints on his lips.

" 'Ow much longer is this a-going to last, I'd like to know? Seems t' me you oughta be able t' handle your ship same as I handle me galley. They comes in an' tries to order me around an' I chases 'em out right smart with a carving knife . . . Sich goings on!"

"Put th' tray there," said the captain mildly, pointing to the desk. "An' don't talk so much . . . I 'opes you 'aven't forgot those chinks off the Yangtze."

"It ain't a bit likely I would," snapped Joe, wiping his hands in his apron. His back was toward the door guard and his left eyelid drooped just a trifle. "But where's th' needings?"

Captain Downs brushed against him as he made for his swivel chair and for a fraction of a second, one of his fat hands touched the cook's. The next moment he was seated before his meal and Joe was hobbling off, complaining as usual. The swarthy guard grinned and sniffed in the fragrance of the food. In a very short time he would be relieved so he could eat too. And soon after that, about dusk, the

Barrachus would be off that precise spot on the coast agreed upon, the time bombs would be set, the boats launched and they would be pulling off to the north and that little cove where they could get mules and some Indian help to transport the great treasure. And after that, there would be pleasant days in Quito, or maybe Bogota, with señoritas, with roulette and the lotteries. A great man, Nicholas Martin!

ONE DAY behind her usual leisurely schedule, the little *Barrachus* entered her next port of call from Puayquil. She was flying, besides the yellow quarantine flag, her house flag and the ensign of her nationality, the very suggestive police flag. The doctor, the police and the consul arrived almost simultaneously and for a while the ship was in confusion. In the shade of the patched awning over the lower bridge, Captain Downs rested. He was comfortably settled in his long cane chair, a split banana leaf fan in one fat hand, the other folded lovingly round a tall glass in which ice tinkled and lemon peel floated paly yellow.

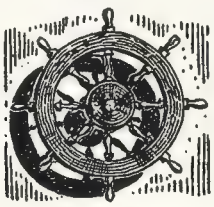
He was attired, this time of the afternoon, in baggy white duck pants, a rather worn white cotton shirt, white shoes and socks. His nose was a glorious sunburst in the mellowness of his weather-beaten face, and his thick, coarse lips were curved in a genial smile. There was also a strip of white bandage round his forearm. Magnificently, he held court. Officials waved and talked excitedly, clanked their swords, twisted their mustaches. In execrable Spanish Captain Downs answered and explained. And then, through the babel, came the consul's clear American voice.

"But say, old man, how did you manage it? We know you've got 'em in irons and the bullion's safe, but how in the world did you manage it? Without bloodshed, too."

"Well," said Captain Downs comfortably, emptying his glass with a sigh, "it was sort of up to Joe an' me. We 'ad a similar bust-up off the Yangtze some years back an' Joe an' me figured things out then. Y'see, these lootin' parties almost never bothers th' cook 'cause they figures on eatin' regular, an' that makes things easy. I 'ates trouble an' so does Joe, 'less you start fiddling around in 'is galley . . .

"So I 'as a bad cut in th' arm an' gets th' medicine chest up 'ere. Only a 'ard 'earted man'd refuse th' medicine chest to a poor guy what's bleeding t' death . . .

"Anyway, when Joe trots up with th' dinner grub, I slips 'im th' laudanum. It don't take much in coffee t' knock birds like these out . . . Which reminds me, I'm a injured man. Pass th' bottle."



HANK ARRIVES BACK
Ware He Cum Frum

Letters of a Wandering Partner

By ALAN LEMAY

Cheese Cloth, Black Hills,
Fall of 1878.

DEER Bug Eye,

I am sernly glad to heer that you are stil alive an kikin, an that you got my last leter. Ritin a leter to you is practicly 2 seprit problums, 1 to get the darn thing rote and 1 to get it to you afterwerds. A man cant tel wich is the hardest. But I gess getin it to you is the hardest, that is the 1 I seem to fal down on the most regler.

So you are at Goldpan Bug Eye, atendin the new gold discuvry. That is news to me Bug Eye, but yer compleet descripshun of wat is goin on at Goldpan was wasted effert. I herd al about that wen I got to Cheese Cloth. Wen wil you lern Bug Eye that wen you try to tel me things that is genrul infermashun you are jest fritterin away yer time. I hav never see the case I did not noe more about wat you was talkin about then you done Bug Eye.

An how meny times do I hav to tel you Bug Eye that thees gold discuvries

is al fakes. Ever sinse we was seprated wen I went after the grub, I hav dun littel but rite you long leters warnin you not to lose yer hed over gold roomers. An wat is the result. Ther aynt any result. Heer you go on a wile geese chase to this new Goldpan town, wen I giv you speshul derecshuns to cum heer. Huh. I bet you look good with a shovel in yer hand. (Good an foolish.)

Wel Bug Eye I spose I wil hav to overlook yer most resint blunder, along with yer other falins. I wil do so, pervidin you wil cum at 1nst to Cheese Cloth. Wat we got to do Bug Eye is find that sachel of gold I got off the Dedwood Coach that time an had to leeve it sunk in a crick. That wil be 1 discuvry that aynt a fake, an we wil not hav to make a munky of ourself with a shovel eether.

Wen we hav hawled our $1000000 dolers in gold out of the crick we wil leeve the Black Hills ferever Bug Eye an good riddence. Ony 1st I hav 1 thing to atend to heer in Cheese Cloth, but I am not goin to tel you wat it is, it is none of yer darn bizness Bug Eye, it is a secrut.

My horse Wilbur, the 1 with the week legs is still follerin along.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

P S I fergot to tel you Bug Eye I hav had a teribil disappointment. I cum back to Cheese Cloth to wip the entire town like I told you in my leter, an get even with them fer keepin me in a jale, an ½ starvin me an trine to scare the wits out of a feller by makin out they was goin to hang him. Pitcher my serprise Bug Eye, wen I found ther was hardly enybudy left in Cheese Cloth. Al the flour sack bildins was gone. I woudunt hav noen the plase if it wasunt you can see ware the street used to be by the layout of the rubbish an tin cans. An al that was left was 5 tents full of biter enders an 1 sloon ful of drunks an run by Rose the dotter of the sloonkeepers father. Roses father I meen. Al the 100s of fellers hav gone to Goldpan like suckers Bug Eye. It was a grate bloe.

Wel I went in the ony remainin sloon an I sed, heer I am, whoo is 1st. An the sloonkeeper looked al around an sed I cant see an enybudy is 1st, it looks like a draw. Wat do you meen enyway, he sed. I sed whoo is the 1st feller whoo wants to gump me an get kilt. He sed I never see a man yet that wanted to get kilt, an I am afrade nobudy is goin to offer hisself onless you put up sum indoosment, he sed. Wat are you in such a swet about, he sed. I sed, I am the Hoozer Jint that they was goin to hang. He sed I never herd of you.

Bug Eye you coud of nocked me over with a short club. I looked around an sed aynt ther *eny*budy that recernizes pore Hank Montgomery ah wants to kil him? An them that was awake looked me over very careful, an walked around in back of me fer a reer vew an studyd the frunt side of me agen an they al shook ther heds an sed No we never seen you befour, ner enybudy else enyware neer yer size.

That jest goes to show Bug Eye. It is a cold werld Bug Eye, you can not make any impreshun on it, as soon as you tern yer back you are fergot. Wat is the use trine to be a grate man, a fellers name is rote in soop.

Cheese Cloth,
Fall 1878.

DEER Bug Eye,

I hav ben watin around heer fer sumbudy to take you this leter to Goldpan Bug Eye an leeve it in a sloon ware you wil be shore to find it. An ther has ben plenty fellers startin fer Goldpan, but they did not look trustworthy to me. I am tired of ritin you leters that you never seem to get, they are practicly wasted if nobudy reeds them. But at last I hav found a feller that is startin fer Goldpan with a onest fase, an he is about the ony onest lookin 1 left, so I am ritin you sum mor wile I hav a good chanse.

I hav desided to tel you wat my plan is after we find the gold Bug Eye, I can not keep it a secrut no mor. I am goin to get merried Bug Eye. Aynt you serprized. Gess whoo. Yessir, I expeck you

wil be rite. The lucky gerl is Rose the sloonkeepers dotter, the most beutiful gerl that ever terned loose a pore feller that was goin to get hung by a Vijilunt comitee.

She saved my life Bug Eye an I hav not fergot it. An I ame to pay her back. I am not shore it woud be a mistake to merry her in eny case Bug Eye, I never see such a gerl.

THER is ony 1 thing that is kind of holdin up the merrije Bug Eye. Wel 2 things, but the mane thing is her father. His name is Otoole, Bug Eye, I think he is Irish, al leest he has Irish blud. I hav alreddy aproched him on the subjeck, an found it was a grate mistake to so do. I sed wel Mister Otoole, an he sed if you think you are gona get free drinks by calin me Mister you hav got anuther think cumin, make it a large 1. Ha ha I sed, has yer dotter ever ben merried Mister Otoole. He sed no. I sed I woud not werry about that, I woudunt be serprized if she had a chanse soon. He sed yes I am soon takin her back eest fer that very reesin. It wil not be nesry I sed I hav a beter plan. How woud you like me fer a sun-in-law Mister Otoole.

He sed nuthin fer a minnit. I thout he had not understanded me. I repeeted my qweschin slitely louder. He sed nuthin at all Bug Eye, be went on about his werk, wich hapened to be getin out a dubbel barl shot gun frum under the bar an examinin it very close. I sed, Hay I am watin fer a answer. He blew his breth on the shot gun barl, an polished it on his sleeve, an finly he sed wat is this I hav in my hand, an I sed that is a shot gun you darn fool, an he sed that is yer anser.

I sed I am afrade I do not understand you, I woud rather hav my anser spoke. He sed if this heer anser speeks it wil be the last speek you wil heer. But I do not expeck it wil cum to that he sed, you look like a reesabul man. I went away to think that it over Bug Eye, an I hav finly cum to the concluzhun that the old Mick was hintin sumthin, an it is my beleef he was hintin he amed to shoot me with that shot gun. Can you imajin it Bug Eye. But wat can a man do. He is Roses father, I woud not harm a hare of his hed fer eny amount. At leest not until after we are merried, Bug Eye. You can eesy see it mite prejudis Rose agenst me if I was to giv him the thrashin he deserves.

The other thing that kind of stands in the way is Rosys attitood Bug Eye. I feer she is bashful. But I think I hav got the dificulty overcum. It took 3 days steddy werk to see her alown Bug Eye, her old man keeps a very close watch. But finly I found her hangin out a wash, an I sed gimmy kiss, an she dun so. Lets get merried I sed. She sed, Not yet. I sed wy not yet. She sed I am stil in my rite mind. I sed if you are in yer rite mind you wil not tern down a feller that has mor than $1000000 dolers. She sed you are sernly whoopin. I sed that is wat I hav got, an she sed lets see it, an I sed it is in the bottom of a crick, I wil hav to find it 1st. She sed chase along an look fer it, an cum back wen you find it. I sed, wil you merry me wen I find it an she sed I wil think it over. So that is ware the mater stands Bug Eye, I am a hapy man.

Now I am goin back to look fer that sachel of gold Bug Eye. An I wil expeck to find you heer wen I cum back. No foolin Bug Eye, you had beter be heer I meen it. I feel I wil need yer help, this is not time to go back on yer pardner now.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

P S In case you want to noe wat yer part in the merrije is, it is to take up the atenshun of Mister Otoole Bug Eye until the hapy cuppel has reeched a safe distunse. This shoud be eesy fer you if you are the man you used to be. You wil hav to do it in eny case if ever you expeck to get yer ½ of the gold frum the Dedwood coach. This is 1 plase ware I wil not giv in to you Bug Eye, no not 1 inch.

Wilbur my horse with the week back is stil folerin along.

Cheese Cloth,
Follerin wk.

DEER Bug Eye,

I hav ben away fer sum days Bug Eye serchin fer the sachel of gold up this river an down that crick, an hav now arived bak in Cheese Cloth an found yer dasterdly leter watin fer me at the sloon. Wat the hel heer Bug Eye I never see nuthin ½ so insultin.

At 1st I thout I woud meerly ignore it, an pockit both ½s of the Dedwood gold an go home an merry Rose the sloonkeepers dotter an never let yer naim cross my doorstep no mor. But I have desided to be leenyent with you, you are ony a pore ignernt hil bily at best Bug Eye, wat can a man expeck.

Wat do you meen by sayin you refoos to cum to Cheese Cloth as long as I am makin a fool of myself. I ask you Bug Eye hav you ever see me make a fool of myself befour. No. This meerly goes under the hed of 1 of yer insultin remarks that you didunt noe eny beter than to go to werk an make, an I spose I wil hav to meet it with dignyfied silunts.

An wat do you meen Bug Eye sayin that I am a ongrateful cuss, amin to take such a crool revenge on a pore innisent gerl that has saved my life. I hav no idee wat you are talkin about. An wy do you say that fer yr. part you fergiv her, we al hav our moments of weekness an she probly did not reelize the consekenses of her act. Fergiv her fer wat Bug Eye? Wat did she ever do to you. That is a fine way to talk Bug Eye about a gerl that has saved the life of yer pore pardner.

Finly Bug Eye I spose I wil hav to overlook yer calin Rose a piefase, it is jest 1 mor thing you don't noe enythin about. An heer is yer finul warning Bug Eye. I am leevin heer to serch fer the gold agen tomorrer an be gone about a week. An you make it a speshul point to see that I find you heer wen I get back, or it wil be the werse fer you. I meen it Bug Eye, I am good an tird of yer munkyshines.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

Peg Leg, Black Hills,
Fall 1878.

DEER Bug Eye,

Wel dawgone it Bug Eye, heer I hav werked my way back to Peg Leg, serchin fer that sachel of gold al the way. An I never new that ther was so meny cricks that looked jest alike or so meny trees standin alongside them with practicly no difrunts between them. I bet I hav waded mor than 40ty miles waste deep in cold water lookin fer that darn gold in difrunt cricks, an sumtimes I think sumbudy has found it an tooken it sumplase else.

Wel I wil werk my way back agen Bug Eye, I am a littel discerijed but I am a man of determinashun, I am not beet yet.

I AM sendin this to Cheese Cloth Bug Eye, on the prinsipul that if you aynt in Cheese Cloth by gosh you beter be, I hav told you wat I expeck of you fer the last time. Evry time you go agenst my wishes Bug Eye you want to say to yerself, I am meerly cuttin myself off frum ½ a $1000000 dolers that Hank kinely meens to share with me. An it wil be no less than the trooth Bug Eye.

Ther is a kine of revivel of intrest heer at Peg Leg, the town is full of fellers agen. You remember I told you a wile ago al the fellers roshed out of Peg Leg, but a new lot of them has rosh in agen. But they are difrunt fellers Bug Eye, I hav had no trubbel of any kine.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

P S I giv Wilbur my week horse his freedom, but I gess he perfers sowrdoe bred.

Up in the woods, later.

DEER Bug Eye,

I am on the rite track now Bug Eye, I have found the rite crick at last. Halyloogy Bug Eye the gold is ours.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

P S No I was rong.

Cheese Cloth, Black Hills,
Fall of 1878.

DEER Bug Eye,

Ah Hah Bug Eye, I hav found the gold, I hav found the gold. It was just as I thout, rite ware I new it was al the time, an I hav found it. I gess you are reddy to talk turkey now my tal frend, I hav found the gold. An it is al in the sachel, nobudy has taken any of it, an I hav found it, in fack I am sittin on it rite now. Halyloogy Bug Eye we are rich men.

I hav cleverly hided it in a plase wich I wil not name fer my own good reesins. Now you lissen to me Bug Eye. You hav not yet cum to Cheese Cloth like I told you to do, I wil admit I was not very much serprised to find such was the case. It is plane you hav slid into 1 of yer bul heded streeks, an the 1st thing you beter do is slide rite out of it agen, befour it costs you a pritty penny. You hav got 1 mor chanse to go bak to Ohio a rich man an ride aroun in a cerrige with any number horses out in frunt an be elected in to the lejislacher in a hi selk hat, an this is it.

You are holdin up the hole merrije seremony, that is wat you are doin. I am ony goin to stand fer this darn thing about so long, then I am goin ahed an get merried without you, an if I hav to wip the entire Black Hills heded by Otoole singel handed I gess I am still helthy an in my rite mind, an wil hav no speshul trubbel doin it.

But you had beter be heer to help me Bug Eye if you do not want to find yerself a peniless beger compleetly serounded by mizry an not expeckted to recover frum the terific beetin you are linin yerself up for. An that is meerly a plane statement of fact.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

P S I hav not had eny chanse to talk to Rose Otoole an I spose she does not reelize she is my fuchur wife, but she shore as hel is Bug Eye. I am shore she will see things my way wen I show her sum of the gold. If she perfers to cause trubbel that wil be jest 1 mor plase ware I need yer asistunse, we hav overcum werse obsticles than Rose the sloonkeepers dotter, huh Bug Eye. I feer she may be much under the infloonse of Otoole, but jest becaus he is her father does not meen he can get funy with me, I am not goin to hav my father in law start runin my bizness befour we are even merried Bug Eye, aynt I rite.

Cheese Cloth, Black Hills,
Fall of 1878.

DEER Bug Eye,

Things are not goin well with me Bug Eye, no not by no meens.

Today I went into Otooles sloon an he upped with the shot gun an sed you hav 1 chanse to save yer life by outrunnin the shot out of this gun. Jest like that Bug Eye, as soon as I cum in the door. Wat coud a man do Bug Eye, I was unarmed. I terned an huryed out in a dygnified way. I coud heer him shoutin after me If I see you in Cheese Cloth agen you are a ded man, nobudy is goin to fool around my dotter he yelled.

I went up on the hill to think it over Bug Eye. I had nuthin to eet, an I hav spent the hole day up to now getin hold of sumthin in the way of vittels an sumthin to fite with wen the time cums. Finly I manijed to step out in frunt of a man that was leevin fer Goldpan, I heded him off about a mile out of town. He had a burro loded with grub an a Winchester riffel with about 200 rounds of cartridjes, new stile, an difrunt other bullongins on bord includin likker to tide him over til he coud get to Goldpan.

I sed I am starvin, he sed go rite ahed with it, dont mind me. I sed look at this peese of gold, an I showed him 1 of the gold pigs frum the Dedwood coach sachel. I sed I wil trade you even, my gold fer wat you got ther. His eyes popped until you coud of nocked them off with a stick Bug Eye, he sed wat is the use of goin to Goldpan, heer, the sale is made. An he was in a big hury to help lode the stuff off the burro an on to my horse Wilbur, that has went on follerin me throo thick an thin. You coud see

the feller was afrade I was goin to change my mind, wel did he noe that he coud buy the same stuff over agen fer ½ the prise, rite ther in Cheese Cloth.

SO NOW I am al fixed up with a fitin gun Bug Eye an 200 shots, an enuff grub to last 2, 3 days yet if I am careful, tho I wil confes that I hav alredy eet most of it.

An tomorrer I am goin down into Cheese Cloth wether Otoole likes it or not, an I wil figger out sum way to hav a talk with Rose Otoole, whoo I hav not seen sense I cum back exsep at a distunts. An we wil run off an get merried, an woe be unto persooers.

As fer you Bug Eye, I see ware you are probly not goin to get heer in time fer the fitin, it is jest anuther falyer of yers that I wil hav to set down to proffit an loss. An if you think you can explane yerself to my satisfackshun you can jest foller along an join up with me at Singletree Indianna, ware I am heded. I promus to listen to yer story with a open mind. But it had beter be a good 1 if you figger to reseeve yer ½ of the gold after treetin me the way you did. Take a erly leed, Bug Eye, beter start werkin yerself up a hedacke rite now.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

If that darn horse dont leeve off folerin me I am goin to put him to werk.

½ way to Peg Leg,
1878.

DEER Bug Eye,

Bug Eye a awfil thing has hapened, in fack a serys of awfil things, I wisht now that I had of wated fer you to cum. But it is too late now Bug Eye, practicly al is lost.

Yesterday I got up erly in the mornin befour dalite, amin to do wat I sed I was goin to do in this heer other leter. I was goin to find sum way of havin werds with Rose Otoole, then we was goin to run away an get merried taken this sachel of gold along frum the Dedwood coach.

It is a good thing I am a erly riser Bug Eye, I was campt on the mowntin side above Cheese Cloth, an no sooner did I look down at Otooles sloon than I saw sines of strange activity. Al the felers in Cheese Cloth, I spose 40ty or 50ty, was gethered in frunt of the sloon, follerin an wavin ther arms, an I coud make out Otoole gumpin up an down an pointin up the mowntin to. ware I had lit a fire fer brekfus, an they was al armed with guns an ropes an 1 thing an anuther. An I sed to myself these fellers meen no good to pore Hank.

I immeedjutly set to werk an gethered a number of trees around me, falen trees I meen Bug Eye, an sum roks, an I puled up the underbrush fer a no. of yards away in the plases ware a man can clime the mowntin, figgerin not to be took underwares. An I lade my cartridjes handy, an eet 2 meels. Wat coud they be about I was wundrin, I new it coud not be Otoole was mad becaus I did not cum down thare to be shot, I sed sumthin new is up. Bug Eye I was a mistifyed man.

About 6 oclock heer they cum, scutter out along the mowntin side firin frum the hip an shootin farely good under the sircumstances, a splinter off a log took me throo the lip an now it so swole I am a helish site. An ther I lay porin it into them as they cum, an a good job I dun of it considrin this is a 1-lodin gun at best Bug Eye, a gun is werthless unles you repeetedly stop to lode it. An I got 1 feller in the hand, an anuther I dont noe ware, he went rolin down the mowntin, an I took Otoole hisself in the foot. An then I snuck out the back way an throo the trees, an giv them 4, 5 shots frum way over to the rite wile they was stil shootin at my littel log fort. An wen they begun pepprin me over thare to the rite I rosh around to the left, keepin hid continual, an giv it to them frum over ther, an nocked anuther feller endways an winged anuther in the leg. An they kind of faltered Bug Eye an sum took cover, an you coud heer them askin eech other how meny fellers are we up agenst heer, we thout they was ony jest the 1.

They was now firin steddy along the hole frunt Bug Eye, I had to giv up firin frum the 3 plases I had used befour, al I coud do was to rosh around warever I coud keep hid, lodin as I run, an evry time I got loded I woud take careful ame an giv them 1. An pritty soon anuther roled down the mowntin an anuther lost the use of his arm. A Winchester 44 hits with very convinsin effeck.

Pritty soon I see they was losin hart Bug Eye, Otoole was down an it was not ther affare anyway, an I begun woopin like any number of Injuns. Sum begun yellin take to the gully, an sum yeled hold yer ground, an sum yeled run fer the town, the Soo are on us, the Hoozer Jint has throed in with the Soo. An the upshot was they went pilin on down back to the sloon Bug Eye, an I stood up an pasted them. I dident hav the range very good wen they got runin, but evry shot pasted gravle down ther necks jest the saim.

Wel, I see I had wipped the entire town of Cheese Cloth, an much good had it done me. I figgered ther was Rose down ther in Cheese Cloth jest the saim, an my chanses of havin a werd with her an convinsin her to imeedjutly run off with me an get merried was getin slimmer evry minnit. I sat down an pritty neer cride Bug Eye, I woud not be ashaimed to hav so done. An pritty soon I see I was goin to hav to attack the town Bug Eye, an had to get started at 1nst, befour they got orginized fer defense.

I DONE so. I went chargin down upon Cheese Cloth Bug Eye, takin cuvver frum tree to tree an woopin like a Soo to intimidate them, an the way the eckoes was hollerin back an 4th you woud hav thout I was any number of peepul on al sides. It was my hope that Cheese Cloth woud brake an run Bug Eye, but it was not to be. It is my misforchin that these littel short fellers is farely brave men in spite of ther smal size, they stuck to ther guns an fired in al derecshuns. But sum of them perferd holdin thare fire to shootin at eckoes, an evry time I cum in site any plase they woud giv me a volley. An befour long they found out about the eckoes, an giv thare hole attenshun to my own efferts. They made it good an hot fer me after that, it is a wunder I didunt get kilt. An pritty soon I see I coudunt get no closer, I went back to my littel fort a sadened man.

Pritty soon the fellers in Cheese Cloth see that they wasunt bein atacked any more, an they begun lookin fer mischif agen. That is the trubbel with fellers around heer Bug Eye, they cannot be downed fer mor than a minnit at a time, as soon as you let up on them they are at you agen. It is al the result of the crazy idee that has took root around heer, that the best way to escaip frum a dangers feller is to rosh rite at him. Wat can you do agenst fellers like that Bug Eye. Bineby heer they cum crollin up the mowntin agen, holdin ther fire an trine to get close, an they was much calmer this time, nuthin I coud do was eckal to makin them rosh back down agen. Sum of them was werkin up the mowntin at a distunts, an fixin to take me frum behine. I see that I was redoosed to usin my hed Bug Eye.

I nex went to werk an bilt me a long narrer fire, about a rod long, an put catridges in it about 6 inches apart, an lit the fire at 1 end. The idee was that wenever the fire reeched the catridges 1 of them woud explode Bug Eye an giv a good imytashun of me stil bein thare an shootin, see wat I meen. Pritty smart, huh Bug Eye. Ony it was neer my undoin, 1 of the darn catridges bloed up wile I was still gettin them fixed, an cum neer nockin my hed off. Ony I was too quick fer it Bug Eye, I ducked my hed.

Then I snuck away an huryed in a sircel fer 2, 3 miles, an cum up on Cheese Cloth frum the reer. By the time I walked camly into Cheese Cloth my persecooters had my littel fort cumpleetly srrounded an the firin up ther was sumthin terific. An I spose the fire I bilt was still givin them a shot 1nst in a wile. I coud see frum the sounds that they was makin a

very careful an seerus attack on the plase I had ben.

I got in Cheese Cloth al rite an it seemed to be empty, an I made a furus serch fer Rose Otoole. Alas Bug Eye, she wasunt thare.

Finly I went in Otooles sloon, thinkin it was empty an I woud get a drink. An ther was a feller clingin belly to the bar an drinkin with both hands, he appeered to be a feller whoo had notised that Otoole was up the mowntin shot in the foot, an soze this chanse to get a free drink. He flang up his hands.

I sed ware is my Rose Otoole, an he sed you shoud noe best. I sed wat do you meen. He sed Rose run off with sum feller doorin the nite, an the genrul apinyun is that he was you. Me I sed. Yes he sed. I took a drink.

Tel me that agen I sed. He dun so. I sed wich way did they go. He sed nobuddy noes. Wat shal I do I sed wat shall I do. He sed do you want to noe wat I woud do in your plase. I sed yes. He sed I woud run fer my life. Them fellers is cummin back down the mowntin, he sed, this heer is the werst plase you coud be at. He sed if you are a innisent man run, run fer yer life. After sum thout, I done so.

An I woud of got away cleer Bug Eye, ony I find now that I hav went to werk an fergot to bring that darn sachel of gold along, it is a good thing I thout of it, or I woud of got back to Singletree practicly empty handed. So I hav to go back to Cheese Cloth to ware I left that gold.

An Inst I hav recuvered it Bug Eye I am goin back home to Indianna an never stir hand an foot in this derecshun agen, I am lucky to be alive as it is. An I am goin to be content frum now on to be the richest man in Indianna, an mebby the most famus, an I aynt got any other ambishuns. O Bug Eye how I wisht I was home.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

P S Luv is a deseever Bug Eye, I am never goin to fal in luv no mor, an I strongly recomend you do the saim if you got any sense. Leeve this be a lesson to you Bug Eye, hav nuthin to do with the feemale sect. An I feer this teribil experiunts has busted my nerve agen, I feer fer wat wil hapen wen I go after the gold tomorrer. Nuthin seems to werk rite sinse you an me got seprated, I have a hunch that nuthin is ever goin to hapen fer the best agen.

Bivwacked on Deth Ridje,
Hurridly in the Black Hills.

DEER Bug Eye,

This is probly my last werds Bug Eye, I cant stand them off mutch mor, my led is almost gone.

I went back to Cheese Cloth after the gold Bug Eye, an I tied it on Wilbur my horse with the week legs whoo has stuck with me al the way. An if I coud of rode him Bug Eye it woud be a difrunt leter I woud be ritin tonite. But Wilbur run under a low branch, an the gold scraped off.

Otooles hil billyes was hot after me Bug Eye. They did not seem to be any less of them, it jests seems the mor I shoot the mor spring up to take ther plase, an offen I say to myself wat kine of men is these. They discuvered me wile I was diggin up the gold Bug Eye, an they giv me a hard chase, but I woud of got away if it hadunt of ben fer the gold getin scraped off, an wen I went back after it they was on me, an I never got cleer agen. An I coudunt get the gold eether, they had it befour I coud get back to them, an was alreddy qwarlin over it. An I feer it is al split up an gone ferever Bug Eye, I am sory about yr. ½.

TORDS evenin I cum to a good plase to make a stand Bug Eye heer on Deth Ridje. An I was close pushed, an was glad to go to erth in a windfal tangel an stand them off. I hav thrun down logs an hav a littel fort, an I cal it Fort Bug Eye fer luck, you never went back on me yet Bug Eye an I shore need sumbudy or sumthin back of me now. An I hav stood them off

uperds of 18 hours, them bushwackin at me al the time but not getin me yet, I think I hav acounted fer 3 of them, I do not noe.

It is growin dark Bug Eye, I think they wil probly close in an try fer a finish wen it is black, if I do not see you agen I am sory I was delaid with the grub, an pleese tel the folks in Singletree I did not meen to be a lummicks an lose out like this.

I wil keep this peese berch bark in my shert, mebby sum desint feller wil giv it to you sumtime, whoo noes.

Wel it is dark Bug Eye, I can heer them closin in, but I can not get a desint shot. If I can ony . . .

Singletree, Indianna,
Spring of 1879.

DEER Bug Eye,

I hav jest herd Bug Eye that you hav went back to yer home town an are livin like a peeseful qwite sitizen in Middleneck Ohio, an I am ritin to see if you can not cum an visit me in Singletree an talk about old times. I hav not herd hide ner hare of you Bug Eye sinse way back ther in the Black Hills an I sernly was glad to heer you escaiped alive an finly reeched Middleneck Ohio. I wel remember Bug Eye how homsick you was an crazy to get back.

Wel Bug Eye you wil say, Hank ware is the gold. I lost it Bug Eye, it was al I coud do to escape with my life. An finly I wound up on a hil behine sum faln trees, an you remember Wilbur my horse, Wilbur was lyin down behine the logs too, he woud not go away, I coud not make him understand it was not safe ware I was.

Wel Bug Eye cum nite they closed in, the 100 or 200 felers that was trine to get me I meen. An finly they found out I didunt hav no mor powder I gess, enyway they made a rush. Bang snort heer they cum. It was black as a clame gumpers sole Bug Eye, an I was swingin rite an left with my muskit an nocked a lot down I gess an they coud not shoot becaus they was on al sides, an the tangel was so compleet that finly I got loose an gumped on Wilbur.

Fer 1nst Wilbur did not fall down, he did not even limp Bug Eye. We tore out of ther like a troo ¼ horse, you woud not of bleeved he had it in him.

So I escaped Bug Eye. An I cum back heer to Singletree, it took me ony a short munth, wat with lifts on stage coaches an wat not, an I got home in time fer the fal eleckshuns, an Wilbur follered me all the way.

Wel Bug Eye that Perkins boy had got home ahed of me with the noos of my wunderfil recerd in the Black Hills. An wen I got to Singletree it was all over the county that Hank Montgomery was a desprit bandit out west, an had killed 100s an robed coaches an rased hel genrly.

I thout ther woud be al maner of trubbel about it, wat woud any man think. But wat do you spose Bug Eye, they terned around an took it the opposit way, an they giv me a gran resepshun in the town hall, an a chickin diner afterwerds, an a sider-donut soshul at the cherch, an the mane prize in the county plowin match was named after me.

So far so good Bug Eye. But the follerin Monday the ladys Baptist Sosiety cum around with flours an the preecher out in frunt, an he sed brother you hav seen hardships an iniqwity cum into the fold. I sed wat do you meen. With that he preeched a good old thumper of a sermun Bug Eye, it was enyway 2 hours long. Part of it he red off a lot of paper he puled out of his back pockit an part of it he made out of his hed as he went along, an it was a corker al rite, about al of it I understood was that he gessed I was a rintaled snorter an sumthin had got to be done.

Wen he finished I sed wat hav I done, and he talked fer anuther hour an ½, an 1nst I went to sleep, but pa jabed me 1 with his kane an nobudy new the difrunts.

Finly he wound up pritty wel exausted Bug Eye, an I sed I hav not done nuthin, an they argyed an talked an lambasted werds at me fer anuther 1 hr. an it was past diner time, an the preecher sed I was

the most hardined criminle case ever he see. An they werked therselves up into a teribil state Bug Eye, ther wasunt a dry eye in the comittee, an they kep sayin O tern over a new leef an leed a beter life an al wil be fergiven. An finly I sed O al rite.

AN THEY al wooped an hol-ered an cride an sang hyms an went out an told everbudy that Hank the desprit bandit had repented his sins. An that nite a tortch lite perade cum an got me out of bed an carrid me up an down the town on ther sholders hollerin Hooray fer Montgomery the nex mayer on the Republickin tickit, an ther was 4 barls beer, an 100s an 100s of peepul cum an shook me by the hand an promused ther votes, it was a wile nite, if it had of ben Dedwood ther woud of ben trubbel befour they al found ther way home.

I thout it was al a goke Bug Eye an took it goodnachered, but dawgone if they wasunt serus I was reely run fer mayer, fer 3 nites handrunin I made publick speeches until I was a fysicle reck.

An they took up a hooge coleckshun Bug Eye, an had a travelin sinepaynter make a stachoo of me, an they finished it up in cast irn, an set it up in frunt of the town hall.

Heer, I wil draw a pitcher of it, so you can see fer yerself wat it is like:

It is sposed to be a stachoo* of me on a horse Bug Eye but you wil notis that sumthin is missin. It is me that is missin, the darn sinepaynter went off on a bust, an al that he got finished was Wilbur. But they desided to hav it cast enyway. On the bottom of the stachoo it says

"Mebby The Onion Better be Perserved"
HENRY CLAY MONTGOMERY

They was goin to put "The Onion must an shall be perserved", but they desided that mebby that would be too strong, it woud kil off the democratic vote. So they changed it, to tone it down sum. As a mater of fact Bug Eye I dont remember sayin eether thing, nuthin like it cum into my hed, but you kind of hav to brush over the narrer points wen you get in politicks.

This heer givs you no idee of Wilburs appeerunce Bug Eye, the fashul resemblunce is very slite. Not ony that, but the feller has got bunches of mussel stickin out in diffrunt plases on Wilber, an it makes him a changed horse. I took Wilber down to see it but he paid abslutly no atenshun to it. I dont bleeve he reelizes it is sposed to be him.

Plitickal enemies hav sed that the stachoo looks like Wilber is entrin a sloon. Enybudy with eny sense can see difrunt. He is fixin to clime a mowntin, thats wat he is doin. A very natcherl posishun Bug Eye, he is even lookin back to see if I am aimin to push.

Wel to make a long story short Bug Eye, the elecshun was not even close, I winned hands down on the Republickin tickit, an I am now Mayer Montgomery, an everbudy asks my advise about how to kil cow tiks an rase children, an ther is talk of runnin me fer governer. I woud not put it past them. An I hav ben a hapy an suxesful man sense I cum back from the Black Hills, it was the makin of me Bug Eye.

The ony thing is I did not remember Single Tree was such a smal town Bug Eye, it seems like nuthin ever hapens. An at the same time ther is a continul noise goin on, ever ware you look there is sum 1 talkin, it drives a feller into al

*NOTE: This cast-iron is still in existence in Singletree, Indiana.

kines of foolishness. An altho ther is not meny peepul Single Tree always seems stufy an crouded sum way, I cant tel you egsackly wat I meen.

An offen I get lonesum Bug Eye, pleese cum to Single Tree an we wil talk old times an how I wipped the entire town of Hen Crick an made a hare-rasin escape. It sounds much beter than it looks rote down, Bug Eye you otter heer me tel it. Cum Bug Eye without fale, I wil not take no fer an answer.

Sined an seeled by the hand of

—HENRY CLAY MONTGOMERY

Mayer of Single Tree, Indiana

P S O gosh Bug Eye I wil tel you the onest truth, I can not stand bein mayer heer no longer, an I dont want to be governer of Indiana, I feel I am in reel danger if this thing goes on. I seen sum wile geese go over last wk. Bug Eye, it like to kilt me. An if you wil cum heer we wil make our escape, fite our way cleer if nesry Bug Eye as we hav offen done befour, an we wil go trapin in the Orygon country, I bet we can find a wunderfil beever country in Orygon if we go now an get a hed start fer next winter. This stif shert is kilin me Bug Eye, if ever I get in the hills agen I wil not resk cumin back heer no mor.

Yr. Obeedint Servunt,

—HANK

Hury pardner hury.

Heritage

By COURTNEY McCURDY

THERE were three brothers sailed from Gloucester town:
One piled his schooner up on Norman's Woe;
One, bound for Surinam, died from the blow
Of a loose staysail-block that struck him down;
One with his ship was lost past word or trace.
Each left a widow and a son. These boys,
By all arts fearful motherhood employs,
Were taught the sea was arch-foe of their race.

They were forbidden all the wharves and docks,
All tales of pirates, cutlasses, and dirks;
When schooled, they were apprenticed out as clerks . . .
Ah, were their dreams of bills and bonds and stocks?
They met one night by stealth; at dawn next day
Three star-eyed youths shipped out from Sandy Bay.

Continuing *A Stirring Novel*

MAN *of the* NORTH

By JAMES B. HENDRYX

BRIAN O'NEILL, although only nineteen years old, was his own man, a man of the North—free and inviolate, a roamer, although some said he was a ne'er-do-well. Only recently had ambition come to him. Seth Adams, of the Canadian Hydrographic Survey, had fired Brian's imagination with talk of college and had taken him on his Northern survey party. This was a triumph on the part of Seth Adams, for Brian had resisted all sorts of offers from the Mounted, from the Hudson's Bay Company, from oil prospectors—and, what was more important, he had resisted the possessive love of Annette Beauleau.

Brian had discovered Annette when he had answered her distress signal—three columns of smoke—and shot a wild waterfall by canoe to reach the remote Beauleau cabin. Jovin Beauleau, Annette's father, had accidentally shot himself when starting out to Fort Chipewyan. Brian tried to save his life by probing for the bullet, but the old man was too badly injured. He was weak, but conscious enough to mutter a few last words —of gold.

As a matter of fact Jovin Beauleau had already written to his estranged sister in Quebec for financial assistance in developing a mine. He had enclosed a sample from his lode. She had sent her agent, a man named Colbert, to investigate.

Brian, in the meantime, took Annette along with him back toward the settlements. They quarreled and she fled back to the cabin. Colbert arrived just in time to find her there. So did a curious Indian, Johnny Big Fish. Colbert killed Big Fish. He desired no telltale witnesses—if there were gold. He attempted to intimidate Annette. But Brian had followed Annette back, fearing for her safety, and when he discovered Colbert attacking her, Brian killed him. Annette then consented to go with Brian to Father Giroux, the priest who had taught Brian

to read and write at the little mission.

All would have gone well enough if Annette had not been angry with Brian for forsaking her to get an education. Brian joined the survey party of Seth Adams. At Fort Chipewyan Brian and Annette attempted to patch up their lover's quarrel by making a date on a rock point while the steamer *Grahame* was tied up over night. Commer, a bully whom Brian had once beaten, overheard Annette and Brian arranging to meet and prepared to get revenge. Also, he had heard that Annette had received five hundred dollars—her father's usual annuity from the East. When Annette went off the boat at night to meet Brian, Commer followed, with an iron pipe and a length of rope in his hand. He tripped on the rocks and fell. Annette heard him and turned. The next instant he was upon her. A scream was stifled as thick fingers closed with crushing force upon her throat.

CHAPTER XVII

INSPECTOR CRANE MAKES AN ARREST

BRIAN O'NEILL reached the rocky point, seated himself and filled his pipe. For a long time he sat thinking, his eyes on the dull squares of light that were the cabin windows of the *Grahame*. When the last square disappeared he knocked the ashes from his pipe and rose to his feet.

"She'll be coming now," he muttered, as he walked slowly to meet the girl who had promised to join him after Father Giroux had retired.

His heart beats quickened as he caught a momentary glimpse of her in the dim starlight, where the rubble beach gave place to hard rock. Then through the night silence came the sharp ring of metal on rock, a short scream of fright, a stifled cry. A blur of motion caught his eye as he plunged forward.

It seemed that minutes passed as he sped toward the spot, his eyes on the uneven surface of the rock. And then two figures loomed in the starlight—Annette struggling, beating futilely against the thick body of a man whose two hands had closed about her throat. Brian got a fleeting glimpse into a face distorted by hate, as his fist crashed against Commer's jaw. Again he struck, and again. The girl was free now, staggering back, her hands fumbling at her throat, her eyes wide, staring. Then Commer was lunging toward Brian, his heavy arms flailing clumsily. Blind fury seized Brian as he struck with everything that was in him. So fast and furiously he rained his blows that the huge man leaning toward him had no chance to fall.

When Brian stepped back Commer dropped like a poled ox, his head striking the rock with a thud.

Without even a glance at Commer Brian turned to the girl, whose breath was coming in great gasping sobs.

"Are you hurt? What happened?"

"No, I am all right. He tried to choke me. I heard a noise as something struck the rocks. I cried out and turned and he was scrambling to his feet, and before I could cry again he had me by the throat. I know he hated you. I was going to warn you. I heard them talking on the boat. They all laughed at him for what you did at the mission. But—why should he attack me?"

"I don't know, Annette, unless he guessed, somehow, that I love you—and it was the surest and the safest way to strike at me." He paused suddenly, then asked, "Did he know that you had that money you got from Leith?"

"No. How could he know? Mr. Leith gave me the money this afternoon before the *Grahame* came in. There was nobody in the store at the time except Father Giroux and Inspector Crane."

Brian looked thoughtful.

"I was talking to him in the doorway of the trading room just before you came along," he said. "It may be that he stepped inside and overheard you tell me that you had the money in your pocket. You didn't speak of it on the boat?"

"No, I went straight to my room till Father Giroux's light went out, and then I came here. And, oh, Brian, now Father Giroux will know that I came out in the night to meet you, and he will be very angry. I do not want him to be angry. He has been so good to me."

"He need not know. You can slip back on to the boat and he will never know you left your cabin."

The girl glanced with a shudder toward the still form crumpled against the rock fragment.

"But how about him? They will see he's all bloody, and—"

"You need not fear him," interrupted Brian. "No matter what kind of a story he will invent to explain his condition he will never dare to bring your name into it. Men who attack women do not live long on the rivers."

The girl glanced nervously toward the *Grahame*, whose white painted hull showed dim and ghostly in the starlight.

"I must go back. I am afraid. Tell me, Brian, shall we be married—now—tomorrow, and go back and live in the cabin?"

"No, Annette," he answered, gently. "When I have learned what I must learn, then we will be married. When you think it over you will know that I am right. I could not make much money trapping, and I will not live on yours. In the fall I am going to a college, and when I have learned what they can teach me, I will come back."

"You need not come back on my account," answered the girl dully. "I will never marry you. When you go outside you can forget Annette Beauleau. And I will forget that Brian O'Neill ever lived."

Abruptly she turned, and in silence Brian watched until her form merged into the dim starlight. There was a cold finality in this parting, different from those in which her sudden anger had flared. He could never forget Annette Beauleau. Were women like that? Could she forget that Brian O'Neill ever lived?

Without so much as a glance at Commer he made his way slowly toward the camp. On the bank opposite the *Grahame* he halted. Idly he wondered which of the darkened little windows was hers.

"Goodby, Annette," he whispered. "Maybe sometime you'll know that when a man starts out to do a thing he's got to do it, or else—or else—" His brain groped for the alternative, and in a chaos of conflicting thoughts, he made his way to the camp and slipped beneath his blankets.

BRIAN was wakened at daylight by a hand on his shoulder. He looked up sleepily into the face of the captain of the *Grahame*.

"You bossin' the packers of this outfit," he asked.

Brian nodded. The man had evidently come from the Hudson's Bay Company store, for the door stood open and light streamed out.

"Did you give Commer a job?"

"No."

"Leith said he heard him ask for one, but he thought you turned him down."

"I did."

"Where in hell is he, then? Here it is time to pull out, an' me short handed! Damn him! I was goin' to fire him at McMurray anyhow. He's too lazy to live."

"If you can't find him you might get an Injun to work as far as McMurray. Amos Clawhammer's a good hand. He might like the job."

The captain returned to the store muttering malediction upon the head of the missing Commer, and a half hour later a long drawn whistle blast announced the departure of the *Grahame*. Raising himself on his elbow, Brian watched the vessel until it disappeared around the point. A cold drizzle set in and, pulling the tarp over his head, he slept till the call of the cook roused the camp to activity.

Brian stepped from the grub tent to see Inspector Crane approaching from the direction of the Hudson's Bay Company store. He waited, a smile on his face.

"Hello, Inspector! I don't know about that chickadee's ear, yet—but I can tell you—"

"There's several things you can tell me," interrupted the officer, and Brian was quick to note that the stern lips were not smiling. "Where's Commer?" asked the inspector abruptly, his keen eyes on the younger man's face.

Brian shrugged.

"I don't know, and I don't give a damn."

Others were emerging from the grub tent and, motioning Brian to follow, the officer led the way toward the store.

"Did you see him last night?" he asked, as Brian fell in beside him.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Up towards the point."

"What time of night?"

"I don't know."

"Was it dark?"

"Yes, except for the starlight."

"What were you doing up there in the opposite direction from camp at that time of night?"

"That's my business."

The inspector stopped dead in his tracks and faced Brian as a slow flush of anger reddened his cheeks. It was not often that men handed Sam Crane the short answer.

"You'll find out that it's my business, too, before you're through with this. When Captain Moss asked you where Commer was this mornin' why didn't you tell him he was dead? An' why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't know it."

"Didn't know it! Well, who in hell killed him, if you didn't? You've admitted you seen him last night right at the

place where his body's layin' now. Leith heard you tell him yesterday in the doorway of the store that you could knock hell out of him with your fists any time you wanted to, but that you didn't want to kill him. Did you say that, or didn't you?"

"I did."

"What did you kill him for, then—if you didn't want to?"

"Maybe I changed my mind."

"You admit killin' him, then?"

"I don't admit anything."

"You might as well admit it. You admit seein' him late last night right where his body is, an' you was heard to threaten him. No one seen him since till an Injun kid come runnin' up to the store half an hour ago an' said there was a dead man layin' down by the river. It was a bunglin' job, Brian. Why didn't you finish it like you started out to do an' slip him in the river with a rock tied to him, instead of droppin' the line an' beatin' it? You might of known the first person that come along would find him."

"I didn't care," answered Brian indifferently.

The inspector shook his head thoughtfully, his eyes on the lad's face.

"I don't understand you. I've heard of such cases, but I don't know as I ever seen one before—a good man turned killer. When you killed Colbert you done right. I ain't sayin' yet that you didn't do right when you killed Commer. If you'd come out an' talk, man to man, we'd soon get the straight of it, but you don't. If you done it in self-defense, or in defense of some one else, why in hell don't you come out with it? If you done it just because the killin' of Colbert give you a taste for killin', I'll see that you go where you won't kill no one else, unless it's a guard."

"It wasn't in self-defense. No one else was there. And I don't like to kill people."

"What did you hit him with?"

"My fists."

"Fists, hell! I suppose you made that smallish, jagged hole in his temple with your fist, eh? You hit him with a chunk of rock—that's what you hit him with!"

Brian smiled.

"You're guessing now, Inspector, and you're guessing wrong."

"We'll go down an' look him over," said Sam Crane, and changed the course from the store toward the little group of whites and Indians that stood at the top of the slope, having been warned to approach no nearer the body.

AS THE group parted to allow the two to pass, several spoke to Brian and he returned their greetings gravely. The body lay as he had last seen it in the pale starlight, lodged against the rock fragment near the water. Higher up the sloping rock lay a coil of light line. Nothing else was in evidence. Stooping beside the body, Inspector Crane pointed to a wound in the right temple from which blood had flowed and dried.

"You can feel the busted skull with your fingers," he said. "Now, I'll leave it to you. Was it a fist, or a chunk of rock that done it?"

"Did you find the chunk?" asked Brian.

"No, I didn't. But you could have throwed it away, or it could have slid past him into the river."

"Or I could have knocked him down with my fist, and his head could have hit the rock," supplemented the lad.

"Might have," admitted the inspector, "only, he'd have had to fall damned hard."

"He did—damned hard."

"What was your idea in bringin' along the line, if you didn't figure to kill him?"

"I never saw that line before," answered Brian, and smiled grimly as he pointed to a dark stain on the dead man's hand. "Score one for the defense, Inspector. See that splotch of tar on Commer's hand? Then, look at the line. I believe it came off the *Grahame*. Commer must have brought it with him, though I didn't see it in his hand."

"Guess you're right," admitted the officer. "But what in hell would he be

doin' here in the middle of the night, without no shoes on, an' carryin' a line? You say he didn't attack you, that it wasn't self-defense. An' what was you doin' here?"

"I've got a right to be wherever I want to be at any time of night," answered Brian, "and I've got a right to knock hell out of Commer any time I want to. You better search my outfit—maybe I killed him for his shoes."

"Knockin' hell out of, an' killin', is two different things. If it wasn't self-defense, it looks a whole lot like murder. I'm goin' to have to arrest you, Brian, till I can clear this thing up. An' if you don't come acrost to the judge better'n what you have to me, you stand a good show of conviction."

"Where are you taking me?"

"Headquarters," growled the inspector. "And we start now."

In vain Seth Adams tried to remonstrate with the inspector, and Professor Beggs, who was a man of independent means, came forward in the lad's defense:

"If I may be permitted," he twanged through his nose, "I will gladly put up bail, or furnish bond for the young man's appearance when wanted in any sum you may name. It is preposterous to think that he would commit a wilful murder. If he killed this man, he no doubt had good reason."

"I ain't authorized to fix or to accept either bail or bond. An' if he had a good reason he's be'n damned careful not to give it out."

"Ba goss," exclaimed the big Frenchman, "dat Commer she got de bad eye! Me, I'm tell Brian O'Neill she got to look out. Commer sneak up an' keel um som'tam for mak' de fool down to de mission!"

"So he killed Commer first?" ventured the inspector.

"Dat damn' good t'ing Commer dead. Dat be damn' good t'ing if hee's mudder t'row um against de wall w'en she was born. She no good, dat Commer, an' som'tam she keel Brian O'Neill."

CHAPTER XVIII

EXPLANATION

AFTER the burial of Commer, Leith offered to run them across to the mouth of the river in the motor boat, and as they plowed through the chop the old Scot addressed Brian.

"I ha' nae doot ye kilt Commer, lad, an' I ha' nae doot ye had reason. I heard what he called ye yesterday, an' I heard ye tell him ye dinna want to kill him. An' I took heed to the look in his een as he stood clost beside the dure whilst ye talkt to the lass o' Beauleau's. But, I dona like yer attitude i' the matter. If ye've naething to conceal why don't ye come oot i' the open, an' tell Sam Crane all aboot it? Instead of which ye'll be settin' the law at defiance. 'Tis a course 'twill mak' ye more enemies than friends."

"You say he stood close beside the door and listened to the talk that passed between Annette and me?" asked Brian.

"Aye. But if he attacked ye, lad, why don't ye come oot wi' it? The law recognizes a mon's right to kill in self-defense."

"He didn't attack me," answered Brian. "And I've said all I'm going to say."

On the river that evening over the little camp-fire, Inspector Crane tried again.

"Look here, Brian. I know you killed Commer, whether you admit it or not. But I'm like the rest of 'em—I believe you had good reason. I believe you've told the truth when you said you knocked him down with your fist and his head struck the rock. But, unless you can show good reason for knocking him down, it don't help your case, except to make it second degree murder, or manslaughter—and either one carries a long stretch on conviction. You don't want to go to the pen, and I don't want to see you go. I've always been a friend of yours, haven't I?"

"Sure."

"Then why can't you come out an' tell me jest what happened? If you're

goin' to put up a defense at the trial, why not put it up now, an' save me the expense an' the trouble of takin' you clean up to Edmonton? If you can show good reason for killin' Commer, I'll turn you loose right now."

"I've said all I'm going to say, now, or at the trial," answered the lad doggedly. "You've arrested me, and you've got to prove me guilty, or else I'll be acquitted. I won't tell you one story, and the judge another, Inspector, and you know it."

Next day, as they approached the Landing at the mission of Father Giroux, Inspector Crane, who was paddling the stern, swung the canoe toward shore. Brian ceased paddling and looked around.

"What are you stopping here for?" he inquired sharply.

"That's my business," answered the inspector curtly, and Brian picked up his paddle.

The genial old priest greeted them warmly, and Brian saw, as they gained the top of the bank, that Sister Agatha and Annette were standing nearby watching some children at play. Annette took no apparent notice of their passing, and the three seated themselves on the veranda where the inspector told of what had happened at Fort Chipewyan, while Father Giroux smoked his long stemmed pipe in silence.

When the officer had finished, the aged priest cleared his throat.

"And you believe that a murder has been done?"

"Well, not murder, maybe, but, with him keepin' his mouth shut, it looks like second degree murder, or manslaughter—"

"Or a justifiable homicide," interrupted Father Giroux gravely. "Such homicides are recognized by the laws of God and of man."

"Why don't he justify, then?"

"He may have a reason. The lad is no murderer. Upon that I would stake my life." He turned to Brian. "Is there anything you would say to me, my son?"

"Nothing, Father, except what I have told the inspector. I attacked him with my fists and knocked him down. It seems that his head struck a rock and he is dead. That is all I have to say."

"We'll be goin', then," said the inspector gruffly. "I thought maybe he'd talk to you."

BRIAN kept his eyes straight to the front as he preceded the inspector down the path. He did not note that Annette was staring in surprise at the early departure. But the stare was not lost upon the veteran officer, who took good care that the girl saw that his service revolver was trained upon Brian's back. As the two disappeared over the edge of the bank, the girl hastened to the side of the aged priest who stood on the bluff watching the departure.

"What is the matter, Father Giroux?" she asked. "Where are they going?"

The priest turned a somber face toward her as he answered in a heavy voice:

"To Edmonton. Inspector Crane has arrested Brian for the murder of the man, Commer."

"Murder!" cried the girl, in a voice that was a husky whisper. "Oh, when did he kill him? And why?"

"Sometime during the night that the *Grahame* was tied up at Chipewyan. You and I must have been aboard and asleep at the time the deed was done. Yesterday morning an Indian child found the body wedged against a rock close beside the river. Brian will say nothing except that he attacked the man with his fists and that his head may have struck the rocks in falling. He will give no explanation for his act, although the inspector has given him all the chance in the world to justify it as self-defense—"

"It wasn't in self-defense!" cried the girl. "It was in defense of me!"

"But, my daughter—"

The words fell upon thin air, for already the girl was halfway down the steep trail, calling and gesticulating to the occupants of the canoe which was already breasting the current. The canoe turned shoreward as the girl reached the water's edge, and Sam Crane masked a grin with a frown.

Father Giroux reached the girl's side as the canoe beached, but she paid him no heed. The words rushed from her lips in a torrent as she addressed Inspector Crane.

"It wasn't murder! He fought him because he attacked me. Commer had me by the throat and was choking me when Brian came—and he fought him and the man let go, and then Brian struck him again and again so fast that I could not tell how many times, and the man fell and his head struck the rock. I heard it strike, and as he rolled over I saw the blood spurt from his temple."

"But, my daughter," interrupted the priest, a puzzled frown upon his face, "why were you ashore in the middle of the night? And why should the man attack you? And how did it come that Brian was near at hand at the time?"

A deep flush suffused the cheeks that had gone pale beneath their tan as Annette answered in a tone, half penitent, half defiant:

"I went ashore to meet Brian. We wanted to talk and there had been no chance. We talked for a few minutes at the door of the store, but there were others about, and Brian had to go and help with the packing of some things that were being shipped on the *Grahame*. We agreed to meet on the point and to talk there under the stars. I was afraid you would not approve, and I did not want to make you angry. You have always been so good to me. So I waited until you put out your light, and then I started for the point. When I had nearly reached it, something iron rang on the rocks, and I screamed and turned to see that so horrible man scrambling to his feet, and before I could run he had me by the throat, and then Brian came—"

"But why should he attack you?"

"I think I can answer that," said Brian. "Leith told me that Commer stood just inside the door and listened while Annette and I talked. She told me of the money that Leith had paid over to her—said she had it in her pocket. I believe that Commer figured on killing Annette and finishing me off afterward. I believe he was just about to strike her over the head with some sort of an iron weapon, when somehow he fell—for I heard the ring of metal on the rock from where I was—but I didn't see any weapon."

"I did," said Inspector Crane and, fumbling in his pack, he produced a piece of iron pipe about eighteen inches long. "It's a length of the steam fittin' off the *Grahame*. Brian's got the right dope. The damned scoundrel figured on killin' her and then him, an' he'd have sunk 'em both in the river. That's why he carried the line."

He turned to the girl with a grim smile.

"I found this too. Maybe you know who it belongs to." He extended a crumpled handkerchief adorned with a hand worked border. "I didn't figure it belonged to Commer. Of course I know it might be Brian's. Since he's turned scientist there ain't no tellin' what he'd be packin' around. That might be some contraption for strainin' owl's milk, or determinin' the dark of the moon."

Brian was staring at the inspector in astonishment.

"But—if you had the pipe—and knew where it came from—and the handkerchief, and knew whose it was—why in the devil did you arrest me?"

The inspector was grinning broadly now, as he laid an arm affectionately across Brian's shoulder.

"As soon as I looked the ground over after that Injun kid found the body, I figured out what happened. Except that I did figure you had busted him with a chunk of rock. I wanted the chunk, so I pulled off my clothes an' done a bit of divin', figurin' that you'd dropped the rock, an' it had slid into the water. I didn't find no rock, but I did find the piece of pipe. The rest was easy, after I found the handkerchief. I went to you merely to get the story first hand.

"When you refused to talk, I tumbled right away to the reason. You figured some one might think ill of you an' the girl meetin' together out there in the night. That's where you was wrong,

wasn't he, Father Giroux? No one that knows either one of you would have give it a thought. Lord, boy, young folks has been doin' jest that thing since the world started—ain't they, Father Giroux? An' it's all right an' proper.

"So, then I played my own game. I seen the chance to find out just how much guts you've got. I give you every inducement to lie out of it by callin' it self-defense, an' I brought all the pressure I could on you to make you tell what really come off. But you wouldn't lie—an' you wouldn't tell the truth an' bring the lady's name into it—even though you knew you stood a good chance of doin' a long stretch in the pen. An' that's what I call a man! The reason I done it is because I know damn' well that sometime you'll come into the police. We need men, men with guts like yours. You ain't goin' to be satisfied piddlin' around all your life countin' bee's eggs, or figurin' why a snake crawls on his own belly, an' a louse on a man's.

"So I arrested you an' brought you up here so's to give the lady her chance. A policeman's wife has got to have jest as much guts as her husband. If she'd have shut up an' let me take you on to save herself, she wouldn't have be'n—"

He paused abruptly and stared in astonishment at the girl who had turned and fled, and was already halfway up the bank.

Brian cast an inquiring glance toward Father Giroux, whose face lighted with a benign smile.

"Be at peace, my son. You two young people erred only in not giving me credit for a deeper understanding. We are very proud of you—we of the rivers."

CHAPTER XIX

BRIAN GOES OUTSIDE

INSPECTOR CRANE proceeded on upriver, and Brian rejoined his outfit, much to the delight of Seth Adams, who immediately organized a party to explore the buffalo country lying between the Peace and the Salt Rivers. During the month of exploration Brian proved his worth as a guide and tracker. The boundaries of the range of the all but vanished race were definitely located, some seventy-five animals were seen, some excellent photographs taken, and Adams secured one typical specimen for preservation.

Returning to the base camp, they spent ten days in preparing and boxing the various specimens of mineral, flora and fauna, and when the *Grahame* pulled in on her last trip south, the outfit took passage to Fort McMurray with the season's work behind them.

Repairs to machinery necessitated a two-hour tie-up at the mission of Father Giroux, where the aged priest again commended Brian upon his determination to go to college, and gave the lad much wise and pertinent advice.

Brian listened respectfully, if a bit impatiently, and when the other lapsed into silence, he asked abruptly—

"Where is Annette?"

Father Giroux smiled indulgently.

"It is thus with youth—and it is well. Step across to the dormitory. She will be there."

At the door of the large building Brian met Sister Agatha, and the sweet faced gray nun smiled at the eagerness with which he asked for Annette. She disappeared within the building and, when she returned a few minutes later, her face wore a look of concern.

"She says she can not see you. She is busy."

"Busy! Tell her—" He paused abruptly and stood for a moment quite still as Sister Agatha watched his cheeks pale perceptibly, then flush red beneath the mahogany tan. "No matter," he said stiffly. "I am sorry to have troubled you. I'll be going now. Goodby." And turning, he walked across the tiny plateau that was the playground of the children and disappeared down the steep trail to the river.

On his little veranda Father Giroux noted the departure and frowned.

"If she knew that it would be many, many moons before she will see him again she would not have refused. She is a headstrong girl—mayhap the lesson will do her good."

Brian sought a quiet spot on the deck and smoked with his feet on the rail until the throbbing of the engine, the long whistle blast, and the casting off of lines announced the departure of the *Grahame.*

In her room Annette, too, heard the whistle blast, and its sound brought her to the window at a bound. Smoke from the boat's funnel was drifting across the playground; and presently, beyond the rim of the bluff, she saw the *Grahame* nosing her way into midstream. In a panic she dashed down the stairs and hurried to the cottage of Father Giroux.

"Where has he gone?" she asked, in a voice high pitched with anxiety.

For answer, the priest pointed a long, lean finger toward the vanishing steamboat.

"But," cried the girl, "I thought the *Grahame* had tied up for the night!"

"No, only for some slight repairs."

"But surely he will come back when the boat comes!"

"Maybe. Maybe not. Who can tell? The boat will return in the spring. Brian O'Neill may be gone for four years."

"In the spring! Four years! What do you mean?"

"I mean that this is the boat's last trip of the season. She will lay up at Fort McMurray and will not come back until the river is free of ice. As for Brian, he has gone to college in Montreal. A most promising lad, a lad of keen intellect, and one who should go far in his chosen calling. In the forty years of my service upon the rivers, only one other has sought the higher education. And he did not return to the rivers."

"And Brian O'Neill will not return!" cried the girl vehemently. "Why should he return? What is there here for one who delves deep into books?"

"Your father was a man of education. I have some learning. Seth Adams is a scientist second to none in Canada. We have found our life work in the outlands. And, more than any of these three, my daughter, Brian O'Neill is of the North."

The girl opened her lips to reply, closed them tightly and, turning, fled precipitously. Hot tears blurred her eyes as she stumbled up the steep wooden stairs—tears of anger and bitter disappointment. In her room she locked the door and, throwing herself upon the bed, gave way to a half hour of uncontrolled sobbing. Brian had come to her. She had refused to see him. And now he was gone! Her refusal had been a banal thing, a whim, a perverse caprice. She had intended to see him later, before the *Grahame* pulled out in the morning—and now it was too late. He had gone, out of her world, out of her life forever. The great world of men would engulf him. He would acquire other, broader, interests—would know other—more beautiful—more attractive women. He would never return.

She knew now how deeply, how passionately she loved him. Never, not even at the death of her father, had she felt so utterly alone. For Brian had been with her then, had stood by her side as a tower of strength in her adversity. And during all the days and the weeks that intervened, even though he had stood firm in his determination to get an education, there had been the knowledge that he was in the North, that within a few hours, or a few days, she could reach him.

She had all but given up hope of shaking that determination. Too many times already she had dashed herself against that iron will. Nevertheless, she had determined to make one last effort, and in the event of failure, to surrender to that will, and to send him on his way with her promise of undying constancy, and her words of love in his ears . . .

She would follow him. She would paddle upriver in the wake of the *Grahame* . . . She would run along the trackline trail clear to Fort McMurray . . . She would follow him to Montreal! She would not let him send her away— She hated Seth Adams! She hated Father Giroux! For these two had sent him out of the North.

Education! What was education when pitted against love? For all his roughness and gruffness old Inspector Crane was the real man. He would have kept Brian in the outlands where he belonged.

The supper gong sounded, but Annette gave it no heed. Later the good Sister Agatha tapped gently upon her door, tapped again and, receiving no response, carried the glass of milk and the bowl of broth back to the kitchen.

THIRTY miles upriver, with the boat warped to the bank for the night, Brian O'Neill sat on the deck long after the others retired and watched the crescent moon sink lower and lower into the west. How could he know that the girl's refusal to see him had been but a passing whim? That she had not known that the boat would leave within the hour? That she had not known that it was the last trip upriver, and that he was on his way to the outside? He assumed that she did know these things, and that her refusal was but the carrying out of her statement that she would forget that Brian O'Neill ever lived. There was much he had wanted to tell her, many plans for the future to be talked over, the assurance of his undying love to be poured into her ears . . . oh, well, perhaps in hard work he could forget Annette Beauleau.

The crescent moon merged with the spruce spires—disappeared—and Brian O'Neill went to bed.

At Fort McMurray he met his father and his mother who had journeyed down from the little cabin on the Clearwater to wish him well.

"Hello, Kelly! And here's mother too!" greeted Brian, as he hurried down the gangplank. "This will save me a trip. I was going to run up home for a couple of days to see you."

"An' how are ye, me bye? Sam Crane stopped in f'r a bit av a chat a month or more agone, an' he said ye'd be comin' out on the last trip av the *Grahame*. So we come down to see ye. He told how ye're hell bent on goin' outside to a college." He added with a grin, "An' he snorted an' growled that a good policeman was bein' wasted in the makin' av a bug chaser."

Brian laughed.

"Geology is what I expect to specialize on, but I'll know something about entomology, too."

"D'ye hear the lad, mother? Already he's callin' rocks an' bugs by their fancy names! Lord sakes, bye, be the time ye come back we'll be naydin' an interpreter to talk wid ye! But I'd sooner it was rocks thin bugs—an' ayther wan av thim is bether thin chasin' the rainbow's ind over the face av the earth, an' not knowin' what ye seen whin ye seen ut. Where ye goin', bye, an' how're ye goin' to manage?"

"I'm going to Montreal. Dr. Adams, the chief of this party, is the director of the Geological Survey of Canada, and he has promised to see that I get started in college."

"Startin' ain't finishin'. Ye'll be rememberin' that ye've got to ate an' sleep f'r the next foor years or so. Mother an' I've be'n talkin' ut over since Sam was along, an' we figure how wid a little economy we can be lettin' ye have around five, or mebbe six hunder dollers a year. 'Tis little enough, but 'twill help. 'Twill not buy many foine clothes, but ut will buy a hell av a lot av bread an' dried beef, wid now an' then a stew f'r good luck."

For almost the first time in his life Brian felt that hot tears were very near to the surface. Good old Kelly! What had he ever done to help him? He had never stayed home even to help with the farm work. And here were these two old people, offering him money they could ill afford to spare that he might be more comfortable in acquiring an education. He swallowed twice before he answered.

"No, no, Kelly—I couldn't touch a cent of it. I don't need it. I've got nearly five hundred coming for my work, and Dr. Adams says he can get me a job at the college that will take care of me. It's going to be hard work, but I want hard

work. And when I've finished, the education will be worth a lot more to me if I earn it, than if I had it handed to me on a platter."

"Ye spoke a true word, me bye! An' ut's proud we are av ye. 'Tis many the night we've worrit about ye, what wid ye're kihootin' about wastin' yer life like any vagabond. The mother's sung more since Sam Crane stopped by thin in any year since ye was big enough to paddle around the first bend av a river. Ye're her first born, Brian, an' different from the rest—ain't he, mother? Not that they ain't all right, mind ye, but Brian is Brian—an' the rest is a mess av offspring—"

"Father! How're ye talkin' against yer own flesh an' blood!" cried the little woman in the black bonnet, and stiff black silk dress that rustled loudly with every movement. "But it's true, Brian, aroon, we do kind av hold ye different. It's mebbe because av the worrithin' an' all—the others are always home. God bless ye, laddie. 'Twas like a load lifted from the hearts av us whin Sam Crane told us ye was goin' to be an educated gintleman. He was all f'r yer joinin' the police—but father an' I both held out f'r the college. An', Brian—Sam Crane said there was a girl—"

"There is no girl!" interrupted Brian, so quickly and so gruffly that old Kelly laughed.

"Arraugh! So ye've fought wid her, eh? Well that's a good sign! Me an' mother's be'n at it f'r goin' on foorty-two year, an' we ain't so much as changed a spot on a calf."

"There is no girl," repeated Brian, dully this time.

"I'll believe ye whin I see her," grinned Kelly O'Neill. "G'wan wid ye—but 'tis jist as well ye fergit her f'r the nixt few years or so. Women's disquietin' whin a man's got to kape his mind on his work. An' remember, bye, that wan callous on the brain is worth a dozen on the hands. 'Tis the sorrow av me life that I've had to be continooly meetin' up wid min that knowed more thin me."

"I guess there don't any one know any more about fur than you do," said Brian.

"Fur, an' tradin', an' Injuns to be sure—thay've be'n me life work—why shouldn't I know um? But there's things far an' away beyant fur an' Injuns that ye'll be knowin' an' I don't, bekase I've niver had the chance. Life's short, bye. Waste money av ye must waste, but don't waste time! Pack yer noodle till yer eyes bung out, an' whin ye git ready to take up yer life work, ye'll have folks settin' up to take notice. Run along now an' help wid the unloadin'. Mother an' me'd be pleased av ye'd drop us a line in the spring."

CHAPTER XX

WINTER AND SPRING

THE LAKES froze, and the rivers. Snow came and the Northland lay dead and cold in winter's iron embrace. Annette Beauleau stayed on at the mission of Father Giroux, but her heart was no longer in her work. Her thoughts were in faraway Montreal, and in her dreams she pictured Brian O'Neill feasting in sumptuous halls surrounded by beautiful ladies in wondrous gowns, like the ladies in the pictures in the magazines she was wont to pore over in the library.

At Christmas time she made a sled journey to Fort Chipewyan, received her five hundred dollars from Leith and bought presents for all the children at the mission. Also, she arranged with Leith to pay the money in the future to Father Giroux. The mission had become unbearable. With Brian gone, the whole North had become unbearable. An uncontrollable urge seized her to go out of the North—forever. But where? What could she do in the vague "outside" of which she had heard and read so much, but knew so little? She would go—what mattered what became of her? Life was an ugly thing, a thing of broken hopes and bitter disappointments.

The good Father Giroux talked long and earnestly in trying to dissuade her, but

she remained firm in her decision, and in his broad understanding the old priest knew that she must go—a pathetic figure, a soul with a vast unrest.

Before leaving, she handed Father Giroux the five hundred dollars she had drawn from Leith with instructions to forward it to Brian O'Neill, and exacted his promise to draw each succeeding five hundred and send it to Brian with the understanding that it came from him in the nature of a loan, if necessary—but under no circumstances must Brian be given so much as a hint as to its source.

In January Sam Crane and a corporal stopped at the mission on their way to Edmonton with a dog sled outfit, and when they pulled out Annette accompanied them.

"May the good God watch over you, guide, guard and protect you, my daughter," said the aged priest as the outfit swung out on to the river trail. "And remember that this is your home. We of the rivers will some day welcome your return."

In Edmonton Inspector Crane established her in the home of the widow of a former policeman, where for the modest sum of seven dollars a week she secured board and lodging.

She deposited her money in a bank and set out to look for work. But work, except of the most menial sort, was hard to get for the girl whose entire life had been spent in the outlands. Her spirit remained unbroken, though there were many heartaches during those first few weeks when she walked the streets systematically applying at every business house, only to be turned down, gently here, gruffly there, but firmly in each instance.

Time and again she was upon the point of going to Montreal and seeking out Brian O'Neill. But each time her pride held her back.

Then one day fortune favored her and she found employment at ten dollars a week as clerk, bookkeeper and general factotum in the store of a Jew who loaned money on chattels, and dealt in goods, new and second hand.

She did her work more than well, albeit she despised this Jew who appeared each morning freshly shaven but with a blue black undercoloring to the skin on his cheeks and jaws. It seemed to the girl that the dark swinish eyes were always upon her. Personally he was loathsome in the extreme. Each morning he would enter the store, remove a huge yellow diamond stickpin from his tie and an equally huge ring set with its mate from his finger, and place them conspicuously in the showcase. He would then divest himself of coat and collar, loosen the neckband and the first button of his shirt, exposing a mat of black hair, coarse as curled wire.

This done, the man would enter the heavily screened office at the end of the counter and, leaning over Annette as she sat at her desk, scan the previous day's entries in the books, the while his breath fouled the air of the stuffy room with the odor of strange foods. A dozen times a day he was wont to scratch his back against the sharp corner of a cabinet devoted to the display of second hand wearing apparel.

However, at the end of her first week he paid her promptly, and in gold, for which he demanded a receipt. At the end of the second week, he again paid in gold and, upon the pretext of its being the last day of the month, suggested that she return in the evening and post the books. She did. What transpired is not a matter of record, but it may be remarked that, with a beautifully swollen and blackened eye, but without a clerk, bookkeeper and general factotum, he opened his shop the following morning an hour later than usual.

Three days thereafter he brazenly appeared at Annette's boarding house, presumably with an apology upon his thick lips. But the apology was never uttered, and he beat a hurried, undignified retreat down the icy steps when met at the door by the militant police widow, a teakettle of boiling water held suggestively in her hand, and a "go yonder" look in her eye.

SOON after the abrupt termination of her mercantile career, Annette entered the hospital as a student nurse, and later, at her own request, was transferred to the library to fill the position left vacant by the marriage of the assistant librarian. Later she was appointed librarian at a salary more than sufficient for her requirements.

One day in June she met Sam Crane on the street, and the veteran officer complimented her warmly upon her progress.

"I be'n up talkin' with the Widow Carson—always stop in for a bit of a chat when I'm in town—Tom Carson an' I was rookies together. An' she was tellin' me all about you. Told me about the Jew, too. You'd ought to killed the skunk, jest to keep him from gittin' old. Fine woman, the Widow Carson, an' she holds you jest like a daughter, which hers died when it was a baby. She sure appreciated your stayin' on with her when, with the money you're makin', you could live anywheres you wanted to."

"Why, I wouldn't think of living any place else!" cried the girl. "I love Mrs. Carson. She was so good to me when—when I didn't have a friend in the world."

The inspector grinned.

"I guess any one like you don't need to worry about havin' friends enough, Annette."

"Why, Inspector Crane," laughed the girl, "who would suspect you of flattery?"

"'Tain't flattery. It's the truth. Every one down North sent their good wishes. An' they'll sure be proud to know you're head librarian at the hospital—Father Giroux an' Leith an' Sister Agatha an' Corporal Johnson— You'd ought to be arrested for what you done to Corporal Johnson on the trip down. He ain't be'n worth a damn since!"

The girl laughed, and Inspector Crane noted the slightly heightened color in her cheeks as she asked:

"Is—did Brian O'Neill go back to the river? It must be vacation time now."

"No. He ain't comin' back this summer. I seen old Kelly an' he'd got a letter from Brian, which he's gone up to Hudson Bay with the hydrographic survey, learnin' how to make charts an' such. There's some sense to that. Makin' maps an' charts of places is a real job for a man. Damn' sight better than spendin' four years to a college tryin' to learn why is a jackrabbit."

"Do you think Brian will ever go back?"

The old inspector eyed the girl squarely.

"Brian O'Neill," he said, "can't no more stay out of the North than you can. He was whelped in the North, an' the North owns him. An' you too."

"I will never go back," answered the girl listlessly. "My life work is here."

"Life work, hell!" exploded Sam Crane. "What kind of a life work is herdin' books fer doctors? Even if you do look like you'd lived in a city all your life, your heart's in the North, you belong in the North, an' you're goin' back to the North—in about three years," he added, with a broad grin. "Your *life work* will be holdin' the babies while Brian learns 'em the difference between a hypo-cadingus an' a kultus salaratus."

"I hate you, Sam Crane!" cried the girl, her face scarlet.

"Yup—jest like you hate Brian O'Neill. So long. I'll tell the folks downriver you're gettin' along fine."

In the fall, when the new palatial hotel on the high bluff overlooking the North Saskatchewan, opened for business, Annette Beauleau accepted the position as its cashier at a salary that was whispered to be the highest ever paid a woman in Alberta.

IN MONTREAL Brian O'Neill worked. It was decided in conference with Seth Adams, and certain members of the faculty, that the lad should take the regular scientific course for the first two years, and specialize upon studies to be selected during the last two. His tuition was arranged for out of a special fund for deserving students, and a job—assistant to the curator of minerals—was found

that took all his spare time. The pay he received just about paid for his plain lodging over a store and for his meals at a cheap restaurant. With his iron constitution, built up by his years in the open, his capacity for work seemed boundless, and the avidity with which he attacked his studies won the respect and the admiration of every one of his instructors.

At Christmas time Seth Adams came down from Ottawa and carried the lad away for a week's visit in his own home. Upon learning that Brian had gone outside his course for special instruction in cartography, he arranged for the lad to accompany the hydrographic survey which would put in the summer along the east coast of Hudson Bay.

At the end of the spring term Brian was easily the outstanding student of the whole institution, winning thereby a scholarship that would take care of his tuition for the remainder of his course.

About half the wages from the previous summer's survey were in a bank, the rest having gone for books and clothing, but this gave him small concern as he was on the payroll of the hydrographic for the summer.

Just before leaving for Quebec where he was to join the outfit, he received a letter from Father Giroux, recounting bits of river gossip, and enclosing a check, drawn on an Edmonton bank, for five hundred dollars. He read:

> You must accept this, my son, from one who will always have your welfare at heart. Consider it as a loan, if you will, and return it when you are able.

"Good old Father Giroux," muttered the lad. "I remember how I used to scoff when he would urge me to study."

His lips pressed tight, however, as he realized that the priest had made no mention of Annette Beauleau. Next day he deposited the check in a savings account to be drawn upon only in case of direct necessity, and took the train for Quebec.

When he returned in the fall, it was to find another check from Father Giroux —more gossip of the North, and at the end, he read:

> Annette Beauleau left the mission after Christmas, and has gone to Edmonton, where Inspector Crane tells me she is employed as librarian at the hospital.

So Annette had gone out of the North! She, who had seemed so intrinsically of the North, had forsaken the North.

"She'll never go back," he murmured. "Why should she?" And then, with a swift gesture of anger, "Can't I ever forget?"

The second year was a repetition of the first. In the spring came another five hundred dollars from Father Giroux, which was deposited with the others in the untouched fund.

That summer Brian accompanied the Geological Survey into the Churchill River country as assistant to Seth Adams, and the salary he received from the Government admitted of his moving into very comfortable quarters in the fall, and taking his meals at a high grade student boarding house. As before, he received the letter from Father Giroux, this time the enclosed check was for one thousand dollars. When he wrote the good priest to thank him, he begged him not to send any more money, as he had not touched a cent of the previous enclosures, and his summer's work now precluded any possibility that he ever would touch it.

His third year, which was his first in a selective course, he worked harder than ever, seldom sleeping more than four or five hours a night.

When Adams came down at Christmas to take Brian home for his customary vacation, he looked over the record of the lad's accomplishment with genuine concern.

"You can't do it, Brian. No one can stand a clip like that. It'll get you."

But Brian only laughed.

"I'm tougher than you think, Doctor. Honestly, I'm not hurting myself, and while I've got the chance I'm going to learn everything I can."

"No man can cut out half his sleep and not suffer."

"Napoleon only required four or five hours, I've read."

Adams smiled.

"And did you keep on reading till you found out how old he was when he died? You can't burn the candle at both ends. Remember that you are not living in the outlands now."

"Only a year and a half more and then —the outlands forever!"

Adams was quick to note the intensity of the words, the almost fanatical look in the gray eyes.

"You mean that," he said in a tone of quiet conviction.

"Of course I mean it! Why shouldn't I mean it? What is there here for me?"

After a moment of profound silence, the older man answered:

"It is a question of relative values, in the solving of which every man's mind holds its own scale of measure. With many men the dollar is the unit by which they measure their success. Others strive for honor and glory—political or military prestige, or the prestige due to social triumphs, or to scholarly attainment. There are others—whom I regard as the chosen few—to whom ultimate success means the happiness and contentment of living their lives in the place and in the manner that they will to live them, scorning both the criticism and the plaudits of the rabble.

"You know the wilderness as natural evolution has made it. And for the past two years and a half you have had the chance to study the conditions imposed by nearly three hundred years of the man tampering that is called civilization. If you would acquire wealth, or the appreciation of hoi polloi, you must remain south of 55°. To me the original research in the exploration of untrodden ways seems the thing most worth while in this world. I have no desire for wealth, and the fact that the Government is willing to pay for information that is the fruit of this research, enables me to spend most of my life beyond the fringes of the crowd."

"I would rather be in your position than to be the king himself," said Brian.

"You still have a year and a half to choose between civilization and the outlands," continued Adams. "And that reminds me, how would you like to put in next summer in the Sudbury district? I have been asked to recommend a geologist for some special work on the nickel range during the summer. The pay will be better than the Government salary for your summer's work, and you would have an excellent opportunity to study the ore bearing formation."

"Why, I had rather work with you, but if you think—"

"My work for the coming summer will be prosaic enough, working in connection with the chief geographer in the preparation of a detail map of Algonquin Park. If I were you I should choose the nickel range."

"The nickel range it is then," said Brian, and returned to Montreal to devour everything he could lay his hands on regarding the mineral producing area of Ontario.

IN THE spring he received another thousand dollar check from Father Giroux, enclosed in a rather vaguely worded letter to the effect that he was determined to keep on sending the money until Brian had finished his course, and that in case the money was not used it could be returned later. The letter puzzled the lad not a little. For the first time he suspected that the funds were being furnished him through Father Giroux as an intermediary. Had Kelly taken this means of sending the money he had refused to accept? If so, had his fortunes brightened to the point where he could afford to spare two thousand a year? Brian thought not. His semi-annual letters from home gave no hint of altered economic conditions. Who, then, was his good angel?

Suddenly he straightened in his chair, and for a long time sat staring into the glowing coals of his open fire. Annette Beauleau! The semi-annual checks for five hundred dollars would correspond to her semi-annual remittance from Leith—but the sudden doubling of the amount?

Could it be possible that she was making this up out of her salary as librarian at the Edmonton hospital? No, no. What was he to Annette Beauleau? She had refused to see him, even to say goodby when he was leaving the country for four long years. By this time, to use her own words, she had forgotten that Brian O'Neill ever lived. Nevertheless he seated himself at his table and wrote a letter to her. He tore it up, and spent an hour writing another. It was midnight when he finished. He slipped it into an envelope, directed it to Miss Annette Beauleau, Librarian, Edmonton Hospital, Edmonton, Alta., stamped it, put on his hat and stood for some moments with his arm resting on the mantelpiece. Then he gently dropped it on the coals and watched the little red flames devour it. When it had crinkled to a black ash, he finished packing his duffle bag for the journey to Sudbury.

He received another check in the fall, and Christmas time found him again in the home of Seth Adams.

"Well, my boy, they tell me you've set a new record down in Montreal," said Adams one evening as the two sat late with their pipes and their brandy and soda.

"I've worked. I don't care anything about records. I've tried to learn all I could in the time allotted me, and I am satisfied with the result. If others are also satisfied, well and good. If they are not, well and good, also. I am working for myself—not for the instructors. Of course, I realize that I am just beginning to learn. But, I feel that I have, at least, a good foundation upon which to build."

" 'The best equipped scientist that the college has yet turned out,' is the way the president told it to me," smiled Adams. "And, my boy, I'm proud of you. And now it is getting along toward the time when you've got to make up your mind what you are going to do. I suppose you have already been approached? The big moneyed interests are always on the lookout for brains."

"I've received letters inviting interviews or correspondence from several mining companies in Ontario and British Columbia, and one from the Yukon. But I replied to each that I was not open to any engagement, so that correspondence or interviews were useless. The Sudbury people sent their manager down to see me, but I simply told him that I meant what I said in my letter. And that ended it."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Why, work with you, if you can find a place for me."

Adams's smile widened.

"I guess I can find a place, all right. But do you realize that this decision is costing you a very great deal of money?"

"It's worth all it costs. I don't care for money."

"You won't starve," grinned the older man. "You'll always have bread and butter, but sometimes the jam may be a little thin. I'll look around and see what I can find. In the meantime, I want you to go home, back to the river country as soon as they turn you loose down at Montreal and rest until I send for you."

"But I don't need a rest!" objected Brian. "I feel fit and fine."

"You don't look it. You're thinner than you were, and there's a drawn look about your eyes that only the wilderness can iron out. Remember that you are not only working with me, but under me. You may consider that as a direct order. Do anything you want to do up there, but do not touch a book from the time you leave Montreal until you see me again. The thing I have vaguely in mind will call for everything you've got at your best. It's no job for a tired man. How are you fixed financially?"

"I'll have plenty. At Sudbury they paid me a thousand dollars a month."

"That's a lot of money to turn down for a Government position."

"But not enough," grinned Brian, "to pay me to live in Sudbury."

In cap and gown Brian received his degree and, later in the evening, in his dismantled room, he took cynical delight in watching that same cap and gown blaze up and crumble to ashes among the coals

of his grate. Next morning he dressed himself in a flannel shirt, and rough trousers whose legs were thrust into the tops of a pair of clay stained pacs. And, with his money in his pocket, but without so much as an ounce of baggage, he took the train for Edmonton.

CHAPTER XXI

"I HATE THE NORTH!"

INQUIRY at the station in Edmonton revealed the fact that he could get no train for Athabasca Landing until the following day. He left the building just as the train from the Landing was pulling in and, stepping to one side, he eagerly scanned the alighting passengers for sight of a familiar face.

He grinned broadly as he saw Sam Crane step from the coach and, as the veteran officer started down the street in the direction of the headquarters of G Division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, he fell in behind. When within a pace or two of the officer's heels, he spoke—

"Regarding the auricular construction of *Panthestes atricapillus atricapillus*, I am now able to state with authority that in this member of the *Paridae* group, the cochlea is spirally twisted, and the organ of Corti entirely absent—"

Sam Crane had whirled about at the first words and stood staring as one would stare at a lunatic. Then—

"Damned if it ain't Brian O'Neill with my long lost information about the chickadee's ear!"

And passers-by turned their heads to gaze in astonishment at the sight of a gray haired inspector of the Mounted Police shaking a roughly clad citizen affectionately by the shoulders. The shaking ceased and, holding Brian at arm's length, the officer studied his face.

"You've aged in four years, Brian. Doubtless wore plumb out packin' what you've learnt. What's it goin' to be—policin' or snail fishin'?"

"Snail fishing, I guess," said Brian. "But you don't seem to have aged any. You don't look a day older than you did the last time I saw you."

"I've lived right! I ain't be'n cooped up in no town with my nose in a book. I be'n out where a man don't have to chew the air before he can suck it into his lungs. Where you headin', downriver?"

"Yes," answered Brian. "Downriver. How is every one?"

"Well, your ma's ailin' a bit this spring. She'll be mighty glad to see you. Kelly's all het up about crossin' cattle with buffalo an' fencin' half of Alberta for a stock ranch. Father Giroux is the same as ever—claims to be seventy-four, but I'll bet he's a hundred an' seventy-four. He looked the same the first day I seen him, forty years back, as he does today. Wisht I'd be as good a man as he is at his age, but they'll pour me back in the jug long before that. Leith still whets his fingernails on his big red beard, an' the oil prospectors has mostly all give it up an' gone home. An' as fer the rest of the folks along the river, what of 'em ain't dead is about as usual."

Sam Crane suppressed a grin at the air of indifference with which Brian asked:

"And Annette Beauleau? Is she in Edmonton? I heard she was librarian at the hospital."

"Librarian at the hospital!" snorted the officer. "You don't mean to tell me you ain't heard nothin' from her since she quit that job?"

"I have never heard anything from her. Father Giroux wrote, a couple of years ago, that she was—"

"Well, you're a damneder fool than I thought you was—an' her too!"

"Is she still in Edmonton?" There was no attempt this time to conceal the impatience.

For answer Sam Crane pointed toward the new hotel, an imposing and artistic structure.

"We didn't have that when you was here last," he said. "But we got it, now, the best between Winnipeg an' the Coast. An' she's the cashier. Yes, sir. She handles more money in a day than you or me handles in a year. An' believe me, she

knows her onions. Hotel folks ain't handin' out no more money than they can see returns for. An' they're payin' her more than any woman ever got in Alberta."

For long moments Brian O'Neill stood, his eyes fixed upon the imposing pile. Then his glance shifted to his flannel shirt, his coarse woolen trousers, and his clay-stained pacs.

"I guess," he said, "that if she lives there, I won't bother to call."

Inspector Crane did not hesitate.

"Maybe you're right, Brian," he said. "You see—eh—she's changed a lot, too, in the last four years. You'll be pullin' out in the mornin'. How about havin' supper with me tonight?"

Brian smiled.

"Fine, Sam! It's a long time since I've had supper with one of my own kind—since Christmas, with Seth Adams."

"Didn't I tell you he was the real stuff? But—the crowd he trains with!"

"They're all right, Sam. They're all good men in their line. They've been raised different than we have—that's all. Why, when I went to Montreal I was afraid to cross a street. And it was two years before I learned the difference between a salad fork and a regular one—and then—"

"Well, who gives a damn fer the difference, now you've learnt it? I claim a fork's a fork, jest so it will spear your grub. I be'n rung in on these here banquets, an' things, when I couldn't get out of it, an' believe me—I grab fer the first handy lookin' tool that will do the work." The man paused and, with a twinkle in his eye, continued, "An' they still keep me down North, an' some one else does the Prince of Wales stuff."

In front of police headquarters they parted, and Brian spent the afternoon exploring the greater Edmonton—the Edmonton that had sprung up since he had known it. A dozen times he walked past the new hotel—a beautiful, an imposing structure.

So Annette was in there, a part and a parcel of it? Oh, well . . .

AT HEADQUARTERS of the Mounted Police Sam Crane made his brief report and picked up the telephone.

"Hello, is this Mrs. Carson? Hello, Jane. . . . Sam Crane talkin'. . . . Yeah, got in today. Say, Jane, is Annette goin' to be home to supper tonight? . . . Well, how about you invitin' me, an' a friend of mine? . . . Who is he? Well—hell . . . Yes, it's him, with all the trimmin's the college down to Montreal can hang on to him, but they ain't spoilt him—plumb. Don't say nothin' to Annette, an' maybe you an' me'd better go to the movie tonight."

Toward six o'clock Brian showed up at headquarters. Inspector Crane was half apologetic.

"Say, Brian, you don't mind eatin' home cookin' do you? The widow Carson—Tom Carson's widow. Him an' I was rookies together, an' whenever I come to town it's kind of understood I eat supper with her, on account of old times—you'll like her. She's real folks."

"Why—I'll be glad to, if it won't put her out."

"Put her out, hell! I told her I was bringin' a friend." The two proceeded down the street, and turned into a cross street. Before an artistic looking house they paused.

"The widow used to have a kind of a smallish place here," he explained, "but within the last couple of years it's be'n fixed up some."

"Shall we go in?" asked Brian.

"Sure, that's what we come for."

The door was opened by a matronly looking woman to whom Brian was presented, with a curt—

"Brian O'Neill."

A plump hand was thrust into his own, and motherly lips were saying—

"I'm very glad to meet you, Brian O'Neill."

"Go on in, Brian," said the inspector. "I want to have a look at them mammoth sweet peas—I brought the seeds from LaBiche."

As the two disappeared around the

corner of the house, Brian stepped into the living room and stood frozen in his tracks as a book thudded heavily to the floor, and a vision in orange and black rose from a chair and stood, one hand pressed tightly against her breast, staring wide eyed into his face.

"Brian!"

"Annette!"

A painful silence ensued during which Brian's brain groped for words—but no words came. The girl was the first to recover.

"So you have finished your education? You must sit right down and tell me all about it."

As Brian took the hand she offered he knew that his own was trembling. He sank into a chair facing her and summoned a smile.

"I got all I could in the time I had," he said, in a voice that sounded toneless and flat. "But there isn't much to tell; hard work, that's about all."

"Any one who knew you could tell that. You look ten years older!"

"I feel older than that," he said wearily. "But, Annette, you've changed, too."

She smiled.

"Do I look older? Brian, you must never tell a lady she's growing old."

He shook his head slowly, his eyes on her face.

"No, not older. It isn't that. But—somehow—different."

A ripple of laughter that sounded a trifle forced greeted the words.

"Oh, yes, I'm different. What a terrible little savage I must have been way back in those other days."

"Do you believe that?" he asked gruffly. "It wasn't what I was thinking."

She was aware that his keen eyes had swept in a glance from her bobbed hair to the toes of her orange pumps, and had come to rest upon his own clay stained pacs.

She flushed deeply.

"I didn't mean clothes," she said. "I mean—" The sentence was cut short by sounds of footsteps approaching through the kitchen and the voice of Sam Crane so palpably raised to give warning of their coming that both laughed.

Things went better after that. The supper was an excellent one, and Inspector Crane proved the life of the party, forestalling any awkward silences by relating experiences, humorous or tragic, or good naturedly twitting Brian for passing up policing for the piffling business of scientific research.

THE MEAL over, the inspector looked at his watch.

"Get your hat, Jane," he said. "We got to be trottin' along so we don't miss the funnies. We'll make a night of it—take in the first show at one house, and the second at another. I don't get up here often enough to get tired of 'em. I like to see 'em all."

"But—the dishes—"

"Run along, Mother Carson," said Annette. "I'll take care of the dishes."

"Indeed you won't! You leave 'em lay right where they be, an' I'll tend to 'em when I come back."

"All right," answered the girl, but when the door closed behind the two, she stepped into the kitchen and reappeared a moment later with a checkered apron covering the orange and black gown.

Brian helped, and the task was completed almost in silence, the thoughts of each upon that other time they had washed dishes together in the little cabin on the bank of the nameless river down beyond Black Bay.

"Have you ever been back?" asked Brian, as the girl slipped out of the apron and hung it on a nail behind the door.

"No. Except for a trip to Vancouver last year, I haven't been out of Edmonton since I came. Father Giroux spent a few days in town two years ago, and once I met Mr. Leith on the street. He was on his way to Winnipeg—his first trip outside, he said, in twenty-two years. The city had grown from almost nothing since he'd seen it and, poor man, he looked so—so bewildered, as though he didn't know what it was all about."

"Do you know?"

She glanced up in surprise at the abrupt question.

"Why, yes. It means civilization, and business, and—and ease and comfort and —and things that are worth while." He was silent for so long that she asked—

"Isn't that what it means to you—the city?"

"To me it means—hell!" He replied so fiercely that she was almost frightened. And then, with the fire gone from his voice, he added, "You have changed, Annette, even more than I thought."

The girl excused herself, and Brian sauntered into the living room where he examined the peacock feathers arranged in a fan on the wall, the stuffed magpie under its glass dome, the vividly colored "salt work" box that held the stereoscopic views, the goldfish, the canary and the highly tinted enlargement of a handsome young officer of the old Royal Northwest Mounted Police.

He was just beginning to realize that the girl had been gone a long time when a soft padding of footsteps sounded upon the stairs. She has changed her shoes, thought Brian, as he remembered the sharp click made by the ridiculously high and narrow heels of her pumps as she had ascended the stairs.

As she entered the room he turned, and the next instant was at her side, one of her hands imprisoned in both his own.

"Annette! Annette!" he was whispering in a voice vibrant with emotion, as his eyes drank in each detail of her dress—the flannel shirt open at the throat, the stout skirt of striped Yarmouth druggets, and the caribou skin moccasins, the leggings of heavy blue stroud that replaced the stockings of shimmering silk. "Why, you haven't changed at all. Your beautiful hair is gone—and the tan. I guess I'm pretty white, myself. But we'll get all that back. Nothing matters now. I know that you are still—you!"

Hot tears dimmed the girl's eyes as she sank into a chair, tears that Brian must not see. She stooped long over the thong of her moccasin.

"Tell me all about yourself," he was saying. "Why did you leave the mission? Father Giroux wrote me a couple of years ago that you were librarian at the hospital, but Sam Crane told me today that you were cashier of the new hotel. I walked past it a dozen times this afternoon, but I couldn't summon the nerve to go in. I'm glad I didn't, now. You don't know how it made me feel, seeing you dressed like—all the other women. I felt like a stranger, as though I didn't know you. Tell me—why did you come to Edmonton?"

"I got tired of the mission. I wanted to do something, see something of the world."

"And, now you've seen it, are you ready to go back?"

She ignored the question, hurrying her words:

"Inspector Crane and Corporal Johnson stopped at the mission headed upriver after Christmas, and I came outside with them. The inspector persuaded Mrs. Carson to take me in—Mother Carson, I call her. She was so good to me when—when I was tramping the street for weeks looking for work—"

"You wouldn't have had to work," interrupted Brian, "if you hadn't sent me all the money you received from Leith—"

"Brian! What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I say. And, when you began to get a higher salary, you doubled the amount—"

The girl's face was scarlet.

"Did Father Giroux—"

"No, Father Giroux never so much as hinted where the money came from. In his first letter he said for me to accept it—as a loan if I chose to so regard it—from one who would always have my welfare at heart. And I thought until just a few months ago that the money came from him."

"BUT—how did you find out?"

"Purely by accident—and putting two and two together to make four. When the first check for a thousand dollars came, I wrote to Father Giroux and told him not to send any more, as I had never touched a penny

of the money, and didn't need it. When I got his reply, six months or so later, there was another check in it, and a sort of rambling explanation that he was determined to keep on sending the money until I had completed my course. I suspected then that he was acting as an agent for some one else. I thought first it was Kelly. He and mother had offered to give me five or six hundred a year, but I refused because I knew they needed every cent that came their way.

"But I knew he couldn't dig up a thousand a year, much less two thousand. You were the only one left, and the payments coming semi-annually as they did, checked up with your income from Leith. I was puzzled about the thousand, until I guessed that you were saving it out of your salary. Here it is, Annette, every cent of it—and all the accrued interest. I banked each check as it came in a savings account to be drawn upon only in case of direst need—and I never had to draw on it."

"But how did you live?" asked the girl, fingering the draft that Brian had placed in her hands.

"Worked," answered the lad laconically. "I was assistant to the curator of minerals at school, and each summer I worked during vacation. The first two years were pretty tough sledding; then I got better pay and was on easy street. Last summer I got a thousand dollars a month for some special work on the nickel range. And I've got two thousand of it in my pocket."

"You never wrote to me," said the girl, a note of reproach in her voice. "Never tried to communicate with me in any way."

"I wrote two letters the night I figured out that it was you who was sending the money—one I tore up, and the other I burned. How could I write, Annette, after you had refused to see me, even to say goodby? I thought you wanted to forget that Brian O'Neill ever lived."

"I did want to forget. That is why I came away from the mission."

"And—had you forgotten?"

"I—yes—that is—"

"You could never forget!" Brian was beside her now, his arm about her shoulders. "You love me, and I love you, and have loved you from the first moment I saw you there at the foot of the fall! I, too, have tried to forget—but there has never been a single day that thought of you was not in my mind. And it will be so until the end of our lives. We will be married in the morning. We leave for the North at noon."

"Married!" The girl leaped to her feet and stood facing him. "Married, and leave for the North tomorrow!"

The hazel eyes flashed angrily. The hot blood and the pride that was her heritage from the Beauleaus and the Fontenelles flamed high, withering love, destroying values. And when she spoke her words stabbed like the keen blade of a rapier.

"Who are you to order me to marry you, and at a moment's notice, to give up all that I've worked for, and accompany you into the North to live in a cabin, or a teepee? You were right when you said that I have changed. I am not the unsophisticated young girl who, at the cabin, and on the lake, and again at Chipewyan, begged you to marry her! You were the whole world to me then. I would have followed you gladly—blindly—anywhere you chose to lead. I would have worked for you, been a wife to you, and we would have been happy. But you scorned that love—you made your choice between me and that education which is the refinement of the civilization that you now profess to hate.

"Then I too sought civilization. I would learn what it held that was stronger than love—for, you did love me, Brian—you love me, now. But if the civilization that you drove me to seek has claimed me for its own, you have only yourself to thank. Go North tomorrow, if you will. But, you'll go alone. I hate the North!"

The words choked in her throat. Tears gushed from her eyes and, turning abruptly, she fled from the room. There was the soft sound of rapidly flying moc-

casined feet upon the stairs, the slamming of a door and—silence.

FOR LONG moments Brian O'Neill stood still. Somewhere in the house a brass voiced clock struck nine. An oblong of buff paper caught his eye and he retrieved the bank draft that had fallen unheeded to the floor. He stared at it for a moment, then slowly turned it over and, as if writing an endorsement, he penciled the word "goodby" and laying it upon the table beside the stuffed magpie, he picked up his hat and passed out into the night.

And from her darkened window Annette, with tight pressed lips, and hands clenched till the nails bit into the palms, watched him disappear into the darkness beyond the street light.

At eleven o'clock when Sam Crane and the widow Carson returned it was to find the living room deserted. Their eyes met in a questioning glance, and the widow tiptoed up the stairs, to return a few moments later, a dark frown on her face.

"She's up in her room—cryin'. I hate that Brian O'Neill. He's caused her all the misery she ever had. Hadn't be'n for him, she'd be'n married an' happy long ago. Lord knows she'd had plenty of chances—good ones, too—folks that has automobiles an' don't run around with their boots all covered with mud!"

"Huh," grunted the inspector. "He's as good as she is, mud or no mud."

"He ain't no such thing. They ain't no man good enough for her. Land sakes, Sam Crane, looks like you'd have some sense at your age. What's she up there cryin' her eyes out for then? Tell me that. It's because he's hurt her, that's why!"

"Maybe the hurtin' was the other way round."

"They've had a quarrel, that's what. An' jest like a man he's said somethin' mean."

"An' jest like a woman," grinned the officer, "she never opened her head, I s'pose."

"There's no fool like an' old fool, Sam Crane. You make me sick!"

"Now, look here, Jane, chances is them two young folks has had a battle of some sort, but I don't see no call to make it a general engagement. I'll hunt up Brian in the mornin' an', if he'll talk, I'll get the straight of it—"

"Get the straight of it. I'll get the straight of it—an' I'll get it from her! An' when I do, you'll find out she's right."

"Well, maybe," admitted the inspector, a twinkle in his eye. "Women sometimes is."

CHAPTER XXII

MAN OF THE NORTH

INSPECTOR CRANE did not see Brian the following morning nor for many mornings thereafter.

Wandering aimlessly about the streets after leaving the Widow Carson's, the lad paused suddenly before a brilliantly lighted garage. In the office two men sat talking. Brian opened the door and walked in.

"How is the road to Athabasca Landing?" he asked.

"None too good," answered a man, evidently the proprietor.

"Can you get a car over it?"

"Sure."

"I want to go there. Do you have cars for hire?"

"Yes. When would you want to go?"

"Right now."

"Won't morning do? I don't know as I could get hold of a driver this time of night."

"No, I want to go now."

The garage man frowned and thoughtfully scratched the side of his nose with a lead pencil. Then he turned to his companion.

"How about you? Want to make a drive?"

The other considered.

"Well, I might—to help you out. I never be'n to the Landin'. How far is it?"

"Oh, around between ninety an' a hundred miles. The road ain't so good, but you won't have no trouble. Hit straight

north—you can't get off the road once you get on it."

"All right, I'll go. Wait till I call up the old woman."

A few minutes later they had left Edmonton behind and headed northward through a level farming country, dotted with groves of poplars and willows that loomed as dark blotches in the feeble starlight.

As the farming country gave place to swamps and wooded hills, the driver's curiosity regarding this nocturnal traveler who carried no baggage led him to attempt conversation but, meeting with no success, he lapsed into silence, and shortly after daylight he delivered his passenger in the little town that is the gateway of the North.

Brian bought a canoe, loaded it with the necessary supplies, and within two hours of his arrival, pushed out into the current of the mighty Athabasca.

Several days later he headed up the Clearwater, and on the next day but one beached his canoe before the cabin of Kelly O'Neill, to be welcomed with open arms by old Kelly and his mother, and shyly, by a half dozen assorted brothers and sisters.

"Reminds me of the return of the prodigal," laughed Brian later, as he helped Kelly butcher a calf.

"Yep—only different, me bye. F'r av I thought ye'd be'n wastin' yer time an' yer money on wild women, an' whatnot like the Book says, I'm doubtin' I'd kill a calf f'r ye—onless, mebbe a runt, or a sick wan. Anyways, not a catalo calf."

"A what?" asked Brian.

"Sure, a catalo. A cross between a range cow an' a full blood buffalo bull. Sam Crane fixed it up so I could borry the loan av a bull from the Wainwright herd, an' I've got siven as foine calves as ye'll wish to see. 'Tis the future av the country, Brian—the catalo. They can winter out where cattle can't. Ut's fine meat ye'll be aytin' at dinner, an' ye deserve ut. Ut's great things I've be'n hearin' about ye—batein' the whole school, an' comin' out ahead av um all."

"Where did you hear that?" laughed Brian. "I'm sure I never mentioned it."

"Ye did not. F'r all the braggin' ye iver done in ye're letters, ye cud av be'n draggin' along behint the tailin's. But Seth Adams is a fine mon entirely. At the ind av each school year he'd set down, an' he'd write me a letter on fine Governmint paper wid DIRECTOR, GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF CANADA printed acrost the top, an' he'd tell me all about how ye'd be'n doin'. He said he thought I'd like to be knowin'. An', Brian, bye, 'twould done yer heart good to see mother take on over thim letters! She's cried over um, an' she's laughed over um, an' she's got um ivery wan put away in the bottom av the big trunk along wid her Gran'ther Larrigan's Bible, an' the bit av shamrock we picked togither the day befoor we was marrit, on the hills back av Ballyshannon, in auld County Donegal. An', Mr. Adams, he'd write to Father Giroux, too —an' Father'd sind the letters down by Sam Crane, an' we'd all read um, an' she's kep' thim, too. 'Tis proud we are av ye, bye—an' to think they's be'n times whin I've misdoubted ye'd iver amount to a damn!"

After dinner Kelly took Brian for a round of the farm, showing him with evident pride the buffalo bull in his strongly fenced enclosure, and the seven catalo calves.

"You shouldn't have killed that one, Kelly," said Brian, as they seated themselves on the sunny side of a haystack for a smoke.

"Ah, he was a little bull, an' I've got two more," replied the older man, and added with a chuckle, "an' to tell the truth, I've be'n honin' to cock me lip over a piece av meat, mesilf."

"Do you think they'll breed? Some hybrids won't—mules, for instance."

"Well, they's still mules, ain't there?"

"Yes, but cross breeding on a big scale will be pretty expensive, won't it?"

"Let me tell ye a thing, bye. Niver worrit about somethin' that's two, three years off. If thim catalos don't breed—to hell wid um!"

"You never worry much about anything, do you, Kelly?"

"What's the use? I niver seen worritin' change nothin'. The things folks worrits about ayther comes out all right, or they don't."

"It's a good philosophy," said Brian, "and simple."

"What ye goin' to do, now ye're aggucated?"

"Nothing, for the present. I'll stay here a few days, and then I'll drift on downriver. I don't know. And I don't much care."

The older man was quick to catch the note of indifference in the voice. He slanted a glance toward the other, who sat with his eyes on the far hills.

"An' how about the gurl," he asked.

"There is no girl," answered Brian. "I told you that once before."

"What's the use of lyin' to me, Brian O'Neill?" chided the old man, a bit testily. "I heard all about her from Father Giroux, an' ag'in from Sam Crane. An' I stopped in an' looked her over, whin I was goin' down to Wainwright about the bull."

"You—what?"

"Sure an' I did. There in the big hotel that looks like a castle—an' a fittin' place f'r her, f'r she looks like a queen, wid her foine clothes an' grand manners. Av she seen me at all, she little thought the mick that was gawpin' at her w'd someday be her father-in-law. A fine lookin' woman, Brian, but wan, I'm misdoubtin', w'd foller ye far t'rough the brush."

"She won't," answered Brian, shortly, and, rising, knocked the ashes from his pipe.

A few days later Brian took leave of old Kelly at the little landing.

"What's the matter with mother?" he asked. "She doesn't seem well."

A look of deep concern showed in the old man's eyes.

"I don't know, bye. She's be'n ailin' all spring. Her grub don't set right on her stummick. An' she's fallin' off stidy. She's took three bottles of pain killer, but it don't seem to do no good."

FOR ANSWER Brian counted out five hundred dollars in bills and thrust them into the old man's hand.

"Take her down to Edmonton to the hospital. Tell them to give her a thorough examination, and to operate, if necessary. Don't give her any more pain killer, and if you need more money you can reach me through Father Giroux."

For the first time in his life Brian saw the tears in Kelly's eyes. The old man gripped his hand till it hurt.

"Ye've saved her life, bye. I was figurin' to do it, but they'd of be'n no money till fall, an' mebbe 'twould be'n too late. Take keer yersilf—an' Brian, av ye want that gurl—go git her. No O'Neill yet iver quit."

Brian spent a day at Fort McMurray, renewing old acquaintances, and then dropped on downriver, bringing up one evening just at sunset, at the mission of Father Giroux.

"I stopped in Edmonton and returned the money to Annette," he said, when they had got their pipes going on the little veranda.

"You knew—then?"

"I guessed it, toward the last."

"I was hoping that when you returned to the rivers, you would come back together—you two."

"I'll not be staying long on the rivers. I must go where men hire brains, not muscle."

"Has civilization, then, claimed you?"

"I hate civilization, and all that it stands for. I have learned what they could teach me, and what does it all amount to? Nothing!"

"A deep and a bitter cynicism to fall from the lips of one so young. You are brain weary, lad. What you need is rest."

"A few days on the rivers, and I'll be going outside," answered Brian.

"You will stop here before you go?"

"Yes—to say goodby."

The following morning Brian retrieved his old outfit from the storehouse where

he had left it four years before and, loading it into his canoe, pushed out into the river.

At Fort Chipewyan he bought supplies and headed eastward, skirting the north shore of Lake Athabasca, a morbid urge impelling him to visit, once again, the little cabin on the bank of the nameless river. He traveled slowly, landing often to examine the rock formation, or to make notes on birds, or on insects. By the time Black Bay was reached, the urge to visit the cabin was gone. Off Cracking Stone Point he explored the islands and, one evening, flipped a coin to determine whether he would continue eastward for a few days, or return to Chipewyan and the outside.

The easterly trip won, and he proceeded at a leisurely pace. Wind bound for four days, he explored several Huronic quartzite areas, taking notes on the formation, the strike of the rocks, their dip and probable extent.

With the passing of the days, his notes became less and less frequent, until one day when he saw an osprey which he realized was farther north than the species had been previously reported, he grinned cynically and deliberately left his notebook in his pocket. After that he took no more notes.

Two weeks later he showed up at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fond du Lac, bought more supplies and, continuing eastward, headed up the little known Chipman River. On Birch Lake he encountered an Indian who told him that the red death had broken out among a little band of Chipewyans who were encamped on an island in a lake to the northward. Brian set him on his way with orders to notify the police, and proceeded northward to find eleven cases of smallpox among the nineteen survivors of the band. Four had died. He took immediate charge, removing the eight well ones to the mainland with instructions to hunt and to leave the meat on a point where he could pick it up with the canoe. He himself tended the fish nets and did the cooking for the sick. Two of the shore party contracted the disease, and these he brought to the island. Three others died before the peak of the epidemic had passed.

Nearly three weeks later, Sam Crane and a constable came with supplies and found all the survivors well on the road to recovery.

Brian O'Neill had gone.

Days passed into weeks, and weeks into months, as Brian paddled on and on in the aimless exploration of unmapped rivers and lakes. He had only a vague idea of where he was, and he did not care. His supplies had long since been exhausted and he was living entirely off the country—meat, fowl and fish, savored with native salt, with berries as the sole variation. But he knew, now, that he would never go out of the North.

SHORTLY before the freeze-up he appeared at Fort Chipewyan.

"Losh, lad, an' wheer ye be'n?" inquired Leith. "Theer's be'n a letter from Seth Adams waitin' ye at Father Giroux's for better than a month."

Brian shrugged.

"Let it wait," he said indifferently. "How's chances for a job fishing?"

"Fishin'!" The old Scot stared as he combed at his enormous red beard with his fingers. "If ye wadna' fish before, ye'll nae be fishin' the noo, wi' all ye know! 'Tis told on the rivers ye know more than Seth Adams himsel'."

"It's easier to forget than it is to learn," answered Brian shortly. "I'll have it all out of my system by spring. Do I get the job?"

"To be sure ye do, an' ye're in earnest aboot ut! An' glad I'll be to hire ye. What wi' the Injuns gittin' lazier an' more worthless every year, an' fifty thousan' fish to put by for the winter, why wouldn't I gi' ye the job?"

"I'll put your fish up. Get your crew together and make them go over the nets and the boats, and I'll be back in four days."

He left the store, leaving Leith staring

after him in speechless astonishment.

At the mission he received and read the letter from Adams—an epistle brief, and to the point, suggesting that he come as soon as possible to Ottawa for a conference. Brian read the letter and tossed it across the table to Father Giroux.

"So you will be going outside?" said the priest.

"No. I'll be heading downriver within an hour. I'm going to put up Leith's fish for him."

"Fish! What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. I've agreed to put up fifty thousand fish for Leith. And if you haven't already made arrangements for your winter's supply, I'd like the job. I can freight them up after the freeze-up. You'll be needing about twelve hundred percers, I suppose?"

The older man ignored the question.

"Where have you been, Brian?"

"Northeast of the lake—way back. I found some good trapping grounds. I'm going back when snow flies."

"Do you mean to tell me, my son, that despite your education you have reverted into just what you were before you obtained it?"

"Education can't change a man's nature."

"But it can expand that nature, awaken it to the realization of new values—"

Brian interrupted with a sneering laugh.

"Civilization, for instance! Cities and all that they stand for. Damn civilization! And damn its standard of values. I have re-discovered what I knew before I ever saw their cities—that the wilderness is the only thing that counts."

"But working with Adams would keep you in the wilderness most of the time."

"Yes," answered the younger man bitterly, "and to work with Adams would be to serve the civilization that I despise—the civilization that has robbed me of the woman I loved more than life itself. It was for her I worked for four long years, harder than I ever worked, or ever again will work. And now I am in the North, and she is out of the North because civilization has engulfed her, has claimed her for its own. She begged me to stay in the North, to marry her, promising that we would find our happiness in each other. She warned me that much learning did not make for happiness. And, now, when it is too late, I know that she was right. Until civilization restores to me what it has taken from me, I will never serve its ends by so much as the turn of a hand!"

"But, my son, think of the waste, the loss of effort, of time, and of money that would ensue should you revert to just what you were before—a common vagabond of the outlands."

"The waste is mine, and the loss is mine, if waste or loss there be. I paid my own way. I didn't ask odds of any one. I worked for all I got—but I didn't get all I worked for, by a damned sight! My loss is irreparable—the loss of my chance for happiness! If I can't be happy, at least I can be consistent—in hating the civilization that caused the loss." He rose abruptly and put on his hat. "Good-by, Father Giroux. There is nothing more to be said. You and I are as far apart as the poles in our beliefs. It will do no good to argue. At least, we can still be friends."

The aged priest shook his silvery head sadly.

"It grieves me to see such a deep and a bitter cynicism in the heart of one so young. As you say, argument will serve no purpose, and we can remain friends, though our beliefs differ. But are you not going to notify Dr. Adams of your intention to remain in the North? He has been a good friend to you, Brian, and he will be expecting you."

The younger man hesitated and, abruptly seating himself at a desk, wrote a brief note which he placed in an envelope, directed, and handed to Father Giroux. At the door he turned.

"About the fish?" he asked. "Will you be needing them?"

"Yes, I will need twelve or fourteen hundred percers. I was intending to go to Chipewyan within a day or two and see

about them. I will rest assured of my fish, but I had rather see you heading for Ottawa."

"I have seen Ottawa for the last time," answered Brian. And the next moment he was gone.

Three months later the note reached Seth Adams with a letter from Father Giroux.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LURE OF GOLD

ARISTIDE LATROBE, together with Bryce, his secretary, and his daughter, Celeste, foregathered in the boudoir of Madam Latrobe upon the day following her funeral. Suppressing an ill concealed eagerness to be at the business in hand, Aristide Latrobe fumbled at the ribbon of his pince-nez and addressed his daughter—

"As you are doubtless aware, I have not, of late years, been very deeply in the confidence of your mother."

"How extraordinary," drawled the girl, crossing her knees and lighting a cigaret.

Latrobe ignored the interruption.

"In so far as I am aware, her estate consisted merely in an annuity which, of course, ceased with her—ah—lamented demise. It is possible that she possessed other property of which I know nothing—possible, but most highly improbable. It is also possible that she left a will."

The man paused and cleared his throat nervously.

"If so, we shall doubtless find it in her wall safe, and it is for the purpose of opening that safe that we are here. As you doubtless know, I have certain rights in all real estate of which your mother may have died possessed—rights, I may state, which should I so desire, would seriously embarrass any attempt upon your part to dispose of such property. I therefore propose that, in the interest of both of us, we arrive at a certain agreement. Now, my own fortune—"

"Is it worth mentioning, after Monte Carlo?" asked Celeste, flicking the ash from her cigaret to the fine thick carpet.

The man frowned.

"If you will kindly refrain from further interruption I—"

"You will propose that we pool our visible and invisible assets— No, let me talk for a minute. I'll get to the point without beating about the bush—in other words, you know that if there is a will, you are due, in all probability, to fare very badly. Therefore you are willing to relinquish any right you may have in the real estate, and also contribute the sad remnant which you have so humorously or ironically referred to as a fortune, providing I will do likewise. Of course, in the event of a will unfavorable to both of us, we could merely tear it up. Then we are to add up the property, whatever it may be, and divide it by two. Shame on you, papa mine, for trying to cheat your innocent little daughter! But I'm a good sport. I'll agree. Come, let us open the safe and find out what we are to divide."

Aristide Latrobe hemmed and hawed, and readjusted the pince-nez.

"You have—ah—in effect, divined the proposal I was about to make. But, my dear Celeste, it pains me to think that you have imputed a—a dishonest, or an ulterior motive to that proposal. If I had been actuated by any such motive, would I have invited you to attend this conference?"

The girl laughed and tossed her cigaret into the grate.

"No, no, papa, indeed you wouldn't and you didn't until you caught me tagging after you up the stairs! Why do you think I wasted half the afternoon reading with one eye on the stairway, if it wasn't to prevent your slipping up here and destroying a will, if you found one? I'll tell you why. It was because I couldn't get into the wall safe. If I could have opened it I would have removed the will, and whatever else I found of value to a place of, let us say, greater safety. So, our game has come to a stalemate, and we must call it a draw. The only difference between us, papa mine, is that I am honest

enough to admit that I am—dishonest."

Behind Latrobe's back Bryce grinned. He admired Celeste immensely, was in love with her, in fact. And she shamelessly encouraged that love. It was Bryce who kept her informed as to her father's doings in Europe, and as to his financial ups and downs. It was he, also, who had slipped her the word that Aristide had found the keys to the wall safe, and that he would visit it upon this very afternoon.

With a gesture of impatience Latrobe advanced across the room and fitted a key to the steel door. It swung open to disclose a second door, or steel panel, which, upon being unlocked, slid sidewise into the wall. The safe consisted of a single deep drawer, some six inches wide by eighteen inches long, with a depth of eight or ten inches. This drawer was removed and placed upon the floor where all three knelt about it eagerly.

"A-a-a-h!"

The long, lean fingers of Aristide Latrobe reached for the jewel case that rested on top of a thin packet of papers. The lid flew open at his touch, and the next moment his eyes gleamed with avarice as he held aloft a necklace of diamonds that flashed and gleamed in the light.

"THE BEAULEAU necklace! Thirty thousand dollars, if they're worth—"

The words froze on his lips as a silvery laugh pealed from the throat of the girl. His face grayed as he stared wide eyed as peal after peal of ironic laughter filled the room. The laughter ceased and the girl said:

"Shame on you, papa, for not knowing the difference between paste and the real stones! For three years now these imitations have been masquerading as the Beauleau necklace. You remember when mama and I took our fling at Paris? Did you think we financed that trip out of her annuity? Oh, no. For those few weeks we really lived—and the Beauleau diamonds paid the bills. They are clever at imitation in Paris."

With a curse Aristide Latrobe hurled the necklace from him. It crashed against the wall and lay, a glittering heap, in a corner. Again, the girl laughed.

"It was this knowledge that led me to so readily agree to relinquish my right under any will. Do you suppose I would have done so, had I not known that the necklace was paste?"

The case followed the necklace and, with trembling fingers, the man withdrew the papers. The first was a clipping, evidently from a Quebec newspaper, which he handed to Celeste who held it to the light and read aloud:

"Edmonton, Alta., Nov. 11

"The Mounted Police record the death by shooting of Thibaut Colbert in a cabin somewhere to the northward of Lake Athabasca. Details of the affair are meager, merely that the man was shot and killed by one Byron McNulty, after Colbert had killed an Indian, and was in the act of attacking a young girl. Colbert, whose home is said to have been in Quebec, was not unknown to the police of the Western provinces. It will be remembered that he was arrested several years ago in Saskatchewan in connection with the murder and robbery of two Austrians who had drawn a considerable sum of money from bank to invest in what was alleged to have been a land swindle engineered by Colbert. He was later released through lack of sufficient evidence. It is also alleged that he was mixed up in numerous mining ventures of a questionable nature, both in Alberta, and in British Columbia."

And, under a Quebec dating, she read:

"Thibaut Colbert was the son of Jules Colbert, senior partner in the Quebec firm of Colbert, DeRussie and Lalonde. After the death of his father, and the subsequent decline of the family fortunes, Thibaut Colbert became known as a man about town, a gambler, and a promoter of wildcat mining ventures.

"So far as can be learned there are no surviving relatives in the city."

"So that was the end of Thibaut Colbert?" said Latrobe. "He was an unscrupulous scoundrel. He once did me out of a pretty penny! Just when I thought I had him where he couldn't wriggle out. He got his just deserts, no doubt. But why should Mathilde have treasured that clipping? What was Thibaut Colbert to her?"

As he talked Latrobe removed the rubber band from about the remaining papers and, unfolding the uppermost, read it through, after which he passed it over to Celeste, and busied himself with the remaining paper, which proved to be the report of a firm of assayers upon certain samples of mineral. He peered into the box and removed three fragments of rough looking rock, which he examined with evident interest.

"I have it!" he cried at length, as Celeste scanned the report. "The letter is from Jovin Beauleau, your mother's brother who married against the command of his father and was cut off from any inheritance in the Beauleau estate. Shortly thereafter he disappeared and was never heard from again. It is evident that he wrote to Mathilde, offering her a share in his mining venture, if she would finance it. And Mathilde sent Thibaut Colbert out to investigate—doubtless with instructions to swindle Jovin and his daughter out of the property. She hated the very name of Jovin Beauleau, and the fact that he mentioned in his letter that he had found happiness and contentment, would hardly, I believe, have tended to soothe Mathilde's feelings toward him. For she had assumed the air of unhappiness and discontentment, almost from the day of her marriage to me."

"Again, I may say, how extraordinary!" taunted the girl. "But all that is neither here nor there. It seems there is no will, and all we have for our pains is a handful of paste jewels and a letter and a report and three small pieces of rock. Not a formidable array of wealth—unless this mine should turn out to be really valuable. I suppose mama never investigated further?"

"It is extremely improbable. She could not go herself. And Colbert would be the only man of her acquaintance in whom she would confide. As you suggested, Celeste, this property may prove to be extremely valuable. I shall take these samples to an assayer here in Quebec and have this report verified."

"I'll go with you," said the girl.

Latrobe frowned.

"Oh, very well. And to show you that I harbor no suspicion of your good faith in the matter, I shall entrust the samples and the report to you. Meet me at the Hotel Frontenac in an hour."

"How about the—necklace?" asked the girl with a short laugh.

Latrobe scowled and, with hardly a glance toward the glittering heap in the corner, replied—

"Oh, you may keep that as a slight remembrance of your dear mother."

"Thanks, awfully," answered Celeste. "Your generosity is almost overwhelming. It is possible, though, that I may be able to realize enough out of them for a new gown."

WHEN LATROBE, followed by Bryce, had quitted the room, Celeste lighted a cigaret and smiled approval at her reflection in the glass. Swiftly she crossed the room, gathered the necklace and its case into her hands, and returned to the glass where for minutes she allowed her eyes to devour the glinting jewels.

"I put it over!" she breathed to herself. "He really believes they are paste! And thirty thousand dollars is an old appraisal. They're worth much more now. If papa only knew what a miserable time we really had in Paris living on mama's annuity. Poor papa, it seems that everybody takes advantage of him. If he hadn't been so interested in his dear Spanish lady at Monte Carlo, he wouldn't have commissioned Bryce to do most of his gambling for him. La-la-la! If he knew that Bryce had most of the money he thinks he lost. It won't take me long to get it from Bryce—he hasn't much more brains than papa has."

Returning the necklace to its case, she placed it in the safe, locked the doors, pocketed the keys and, stepping into her own room, dressed for the street.

That evening there was a consultation in the library of the Latrobe mansion.

"The assayers are really excited about these samples," said Latrobe. "They

verified the other report in every particular—"

"And they said that never had they seen a more promising proposition—"

"Providing that the ore bed is of any considerable extent—"

"But they said that even a small deposit as rich as the samples, would prove extremely valuable. And dear Uncle Jovin wrote that there was a fortune in it for both."

"He may have succeeded in financing it elsewhere," suggested Latrobe. "But I consider the proposition well worth investigating. Bryce and I shall leave immediately and go carefully over the ground."

"I'll go with you," said the girl.

"Now, now—my dear Celeste. That will be utterly impractical—"

"You don't need to 'dear Celeste' me! There is nothing impractical about it. Even if there is, I'm going. And, papa mine, you may as well understand now as later, that until this venture either proves worthless, or begins to pay, I'm not going to be out of sight of your coat tails for one single minute. And when it begins to pay, I'll move up right beside you."

A WEEK later, to be exact, upon the twenty-first day of May, the three registered at the new hotel in Edmonton. Inquiry revealed the fact that the Hudson's Bay Company's scow brigade was due to leave Athabasca Landing in ten days, that they could obtain passage with the brigade to Fort McMurray, and from there to Fort Chipewyan by the Company's steamer *Grahame*.

At the recorder's they ascertained that no mining claim had been filed by Jovin Beauleau. Police records revealed the fact that Jovin Beauleau had died some five years previous, from accidental gunshot wound, and that he had been buried near his cabin to the northward of Lake Athabasca by one Brian O'Neill. The whereabouts of Beauleau's daughter was not a matter of police record. Inquiry developed the fact that Brian O'Neill was somewhere in the North, probably in the vicinity of Fort Chipewyan.

Armed with this information, there was little for them to do except to purchase the necessary outfit and kill time until the departure of the brigade.

The Latrobes and Bryce were a trio to attract attention. It was whispered about that Miss Latrobe smoked openly in the grill room. This was several years in advance of the time when ladies were wont to smoke openly in Edmonton grill rooms.

From within her bronze wicketed enclosure, Annette Beauleau studied Celeste from the first day of her arrival. Nothing of the bourgeoise about this girl from far off Quebec. Her poise, her manner, the very set of her gowns bespoke the born aristocrat. Yet there were jarring notes. A hard, at times almost cruel, glint of the eyes. Her treatment of the young man who was at her side every moment he was not at the heels of her father—now flirting openly and outrageously with him—now ignoring the fact that he was present. Her smoking—her skirts, shortened by inches beyond the most daring Edmonton skirt of the day.

Several times they had met as Annette was going off duty. The first time she was aware of the swift glance of appraisal with which the other woman swept her from head to foot. She was aware also of the look of open approval that she received from Bryce. And, woman-like, she noted that the young man's look had been seen by his companion. After that the meetings had elicited only a slight but obvious lifting of the chin, and once just the suspicion of a curl of the thin aristocratic lips.

It was upon the day before the departure of the trio for the North that neat brass tablets appeared in the hotel, bearing the names of various clerks and functionaries during the hours they were on duty. Annette happened to be looking when Celeste and Bryce passed her wicket. She saw the girl stop and whisper hurriedly to her escort, as both stared at the brass tablet upon which were the words:

MISS BEAULEAU

CASHIER

Abruptly the girl walked straight to the wicket.

"Miss Beauleau?" she asked, with a drawl that rendered the question an insult.

Annette flushed slightly, and bowed.

"Yes," she answered. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes. You can tell me the name of your father."

For an instant Annette stared, speechless, as she felt the hot blood rise to her cheeks. Then she smiled as one would smile at a child—"I never discuss private matters with—strangers."

The girl beyond the wicket flushed scarlet.

"It is the spelling of the name. It is generally spelled, B-e-a-u-l-i-e-u. I knew a man once who spelled his name as you do."

"It was doubtless another," answered Annette, and turned abruptly away.

Furious, Celeste Latrobe strode to the desk and asked for the manager. Shown into his office, she began without preliminary—

"Your cashier has insulted me!"

"Yes?" The manager eyed the irate woman coldly.

"Yes—she did. And I demand that she be discharged immediately!"

"Ah? And would you mind explaining the nature of the alleged insult?"

"I merely asked her the name of her father; and she as much as told me it was none of my business."

"Was it?"

"Yes, it was. At least, I consider it so. And I certainly consider it an insult when any common menial in a hotel refuses to answer the question of a guest."

"It would be well for you to understand," said the manager suavely, "that Miss Beauleau is in no sense a menial. Her position in this institution is second only to my own. Under the circumstances, I would advise that you seek other accommodations. There are several good hotels in the city. May we expect your keys within the hour?"

"Do I understand that you are ordering me from this hotel?" cried the girl, furiously.

"I hope so. My suggestion was tantamount to an order."

"I'll sue you for damages!"

"Do so, by all means. We would welcome such suit, on the evidence."

"I'll tell everybody I know that this hotel is one where everybody, from the manager down, goes out of his or her way to insult guests!"

The manager smiled.

"That would be unique advertising, which would cost us nothing. May I consider that a promise?"

The next moment the girl was gone, and an hour later the trio checked out.

CHAPTER XXIV

SAM CRANE DIPS HIS PADDLE IN

IT WAS toward the end of June that Sam Crane stopped, on his way upriver, at the mission of Father Giroux.

"Have you seen Brian O'Neill?" asked the old priest, when they had got their pipes going.

"Yes, an' it's a damn' shame. He's gone plumb Injun. An' him with the education he's got. Not that I go so much on the education, but what did he go an' get it for, if he ain't goin' to use it? He's worse than he was before. He come back into the country last spring an' went to doin' jest what he used to do—wanderin' all over hell where other folks don't go. I run acrost his trail up on Selwyn Lake where he pulled a bunch of Injuns through a dose of smallpox. Saved most of 'em, where if he hadn't happened along, they'd all died, most likely. Wouldn't one man in a hundred tackled it, unless they had to, an' he didn't. A man like that—why in hell ain't he policin', instead of wastin' his time gogglin' at the country?

"Next time I seen him he was fishin' fer Leith—runnin' a gang of Injuns puttin'

up fish. I tried to auger with him, but he wouldn't talk. Said he was satisfied, an' that ended it. Then he trapped all winter over to hell an' gone beyond the lake. An' now he's up an' hired out as guide to three of the damnedest tenderfoots that ever come into the country—two men an' a woman that don't look like they'd ever be'n nowheres, nor seen nothin'. He's gone Injun, I tell you—an' it's all on account of that damn' fool girl, which don't know a real man when she sees one!"

"It is the way of the world, Inspector. Women ever influence the lives of men."

"Huh, they can raise hell with 'em, when they ain't got no sense, if that's what you mean. Why don't Seth Adams give Brian a job? That's what I'd like to know. It was him that was so hell bent on Brian's gittin' educated."

For answer Father Giroux rummaged in his desk and handed the inspector the letter that had come for Brian the previous fall.

"An' Brian wouldn't go to Ottawa?" he asked.

"No, he refused to go."

"Would he talk to you? What did he say?"

"I tried to persuade him to go to Adams, pointing out that his work would keep him for the most part in the outlands. But he replied that he hated civilization. That working with Adams would be serving the civilization that had robbed him of the woman he loved, and that until civilization restored her to him, he would not serve it by so much as the turn of the hand."

"Huh," grunted Sam Crane. " 'Tain't civilization that's at the bottom of it. It's her damn' pride, an' his not knowin' nothin' about women. I kind of pieced it out from what Jane Carson told me about what she got out of the girl. An' I'll bet a month's pay that right now she'd rather be here on the rivers with him, than where she's at, if she got twict the money she's gittin'. I'll bet she's wishin' an' hopin' that he'll go back for her—but he won't. Them Irish is stubborn."

"It is too bad, too bad," said Father Giroux. "But there seems to be nothing one can do."

"I ain't so sure about that," muttered Sam Crane. "I hate to think of them two young folks bein' miserable, when they might jest as well be happy. I'm goin' outside—got to go to Ottawa an' see the commissioner about a new post. An' I'm a-goin' to dip my paddle in an' see what I can do. Things can't be messed up no more than what they are now, anyway."

Inquiry in Ottawa revealed the fact that Seth Adams was somewhere in the God's Lake country and was not expected back until late summer or early fall.

On his return the inspector called one evening at the home of the Widow Carson.

"Where's Annette?" he asked, after detailing all the police gossip.

"She's out automobile ridin' with the manager of the hotel. He takes her ridin' two or three times a week. He's a fine man, Sam. I hope she marries him. Makes lots of money—got a big automobile—an' clothes! Sam, you ought to see his clothes—an' he knows how to wear 'em. Jest the kind of a man fer Annette. Shouldn't be surprised if she told me any day, now, that they was engaged. He thinks a heap of her, too. You can see it in his eyes."

"Hum," said Sam Crane. "What does she think about him?"

The Widow Carson hesitated a moment before replying.

"Well, she likes him, or she wouldn't go out with him so much. I wouldn't hardly say she was really in love with him—yet. But she will be. He don't give her no chance to fergit him. Sees her every day, and two or three nights a week. Sends her flowers an' boxes of candy, an' takes her to shows an' things. She'd be in love with him, now, if she could ever ferget that Brian O'Neill. She never mentions him, but I know! Lots of times I catch her settin' alone, thinkin'. An' I know her thoughts is in the North—with Brian O'Neill. An' now an' then, when she thinks I ain't lookin' she'll reach up an' brush away a tear. What she ever

seen in him, runnin' around with his boots all mud. I declare to goodness! Mr. Marsden, he's the hotel manager, his shoes shines like they was made of black ivory!"

"Hum," commented the inspector. "Shined shoes is all right fer rookies, an' fer dress parades. He'd ought to mud 'em up now an' then, jest to feel like a man."

Mention of rookies swung the talk safely back into police channels, and the two old friends spent a couple of happy hours in "do you remember" . . .

A MOTOR stopped before the house, the gate clicked, and a moment later Annette Beauleau entered and greeted the inspector with a smile.

"It is a long time since we've seen you," she said, and Sam Crane noted that the smile died from her lips with the words.

"Yes, quite a while. I didn't get up durin' the winter. Keene was laid up with the flu at Fort Simpson, an' it left me busier'n a cub bear fightin' bees. Everything's about the same down North. Had some bad fires in the fall, an' the smallpox showed up here an' there among the Injuns—thank God it wasn't a general epidemic. You'll recollect old man Leith? I'll bet he's sixty-five, if he's a day—an' doggoned if he didn't up last fall an' marry him his fourth wife. Yup, another squaw—Slavi, this time. The last one was a Beaver, an' the one before that was a Chipewyan. His first wife was white. Had a mess of children by every one of 'em, too—had another baby this spring. Must be twenty of 'em, all told. Damnedest mixed up family you ever seen. I'll bet he'll be marryin' a Chinese when he's ninety! Father Giroux, he's about the same as ever—always asks after you. Well, I must be goin'. Here it is, clost to midnight, an' I've got to head north in the mornin'."

As the inspector lifted his hat from the rack, the girl asked—

"Have you seen Brian O'Neill?"

"Oh, sure, I've seen him. Brian's doin' fine. I always knew he would if he'd git that damn' education bug out of his head. He stopped in to old Kelly's after he left here, an' stayed a few days, an' give Kelly five hundred dollars to take his ma down here to the hospital. They operated on her, an' Kelly says she's feelin' better'n she has in years. Well, then he went pokin' off God know's where, jest like he used to do before Seth Adams an' his gang got holt of him. Saved a bunch of Injuns that was dyin' of smallpox way up on Selwyn Lake—nursed 'em through, even done their cookin' fer 'em. Time I'd got there he was gone, an' he never showed up till fall, when he struck Leith fer a job puttin' up fish.

"Yup—jumped right in an' put up fifty thousan' fish fer Leith, an' twelve thousan' fer Father Giroux! An' he done it in about half the time the Injuns would have put 'em up, workin' alone. When he'd got through with that he outfitted an' hit out fer a trappin' ground he'd found durin' the summer, an' he come in this spring with a good catch. That boy knows his stuff. You couldn't pry him out of the North. He's learned his lesson. Why, when he come in in the fall, there was a letter waitin' fer him at Father Giroux's, which it said fer him to come to Ottawa fer a conference with Seth Adams. 'To hell with Ottawa,' he says, 'an' to hell with civilization!' an' he hits back to Chipewyan, an' starts puttin' up Leith's fish."

As the inspector talked, he noted that the girl's face seemed a frozen mask. The beautifully chiseled lips were closed, and the hazel eyes were staring, not at him, but through him, as though they were penetrating to far places, seeking Brian O'Neill. He continued, waxing more and more enthusiastic—

"An' this spring he's took up guidin'—"

"Guiding!" The word seemed forced from between stiff lips.

"Yup, an' he'll make the best guide that ever hit the rivers. There ain't no one knows the country like Brian does. He can take folks in where no one else could. No, siree! Anythin' any one's

lookin' fer, if it's in the country, Brian'll take 'em to it. Take it, more an' more every year, folks will be comin' North—huntin', an' fishin', an' prospectin', an' explorin'. He'd ought to do well. Take these folks he's got out now. I happened to be at Chipewyan when they hired him. Ten dollars a day, an' his grub, they're payin' him. There's two men an' a woman of 'em. One oldish man, an' a young one, an' a young woman that's pretty as a million dollars' worth of calendars! The old one's prob'ly her father, an' first off, I figgered the other was maybe her brother—but, by the way he'd look at her an' all, I soon seen he wasn't. He better look out, though. 'Cause when Brian got a good look at this young woman it didn't take him no time to make up his mind to take the job of guidin' 'em. An' he ducks into the store, an' by'n'by he comes out all rigged up in a new white jacket with a blue band around it, an' a blue scarf, an' a white cap with a blue tassel, an' new britches, an' boots. Well, when she'd got a good look at Brian, you can bet she didn't waste much more time on that other lad, which he looked like he was put into his clothes with a shoe horn. This girl, she's plumb up to date too. She knows how to wear her clothes—if her boy friend don't. An' she can light a cigaret in the wind as handy as a man."

"And, their names—these people?" asked the girl in a voice that sounded toneless and dull. "Is it Latrobe?"

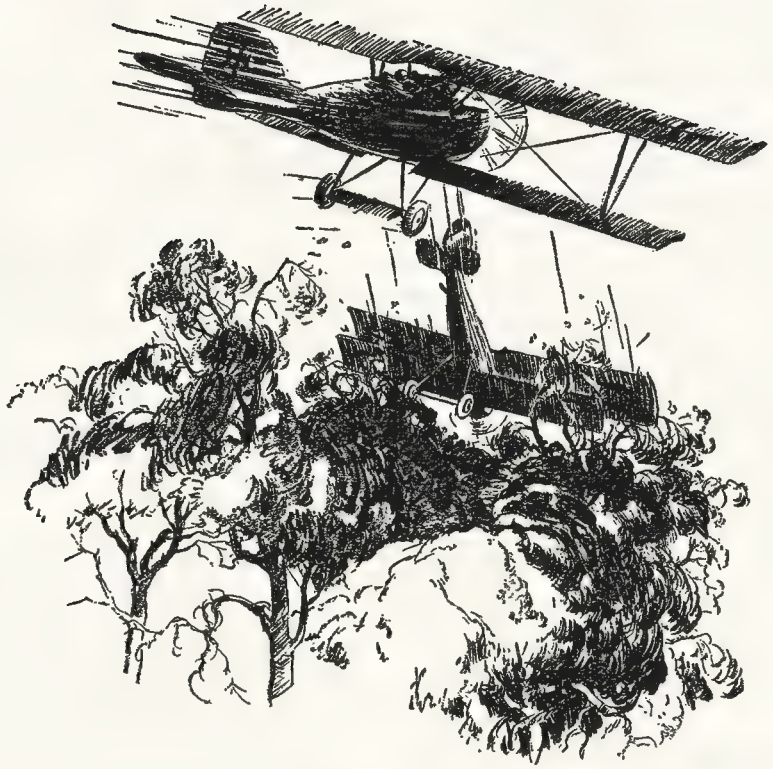
"That's them!" exclaimed the inspector, in surprise. "Do you know 'em?"

"I've met them," answered Annette stiffly. And, turning abruptly, she flew up the stairs.

"You ought to be shot, Sam Crane!" cried the widow Carson, when the slamming of the girl's door told them she was in her room.

"At sunrise," grinned the officer. "I jest wanted she should know that the last time I seen Brian he didn't have no mud on his boots."

TO BE CONCLUDED



A Strange Tale of a Phantom Plane

HORSESHOES

By ANDREW A. CAFFREY

WHAT you hear about "phantom" ships—cruising battle planes with dead pilots on the controls—is, as a rule, spun or looped from the whole cloth. Wartime airplanes, once the hands and feet left the job, had but one direction and that was down.

To go ghosting through the sky, entirely on its own, a plane would have to be a perfect flying ship. With war rush, hurried plane assembly, quick test, and all, the equipment front line pilots handled was far from self-flying. Almost never would you find a perfect handling product. There is not an ex-pilot living who, at one time or another, did not have cause to bleat:

"Good ship? Good ship, hell! Good ship *Hardship!* I'm so busy at fighting ship that I have no time to fight the enemy. Wish they'd get a rigger in this squadron who knew the difference between a ten ton truck and a fifteen minute lean of wingheaviness."

Still, it was not the squadron rigger's fault either. Those wartime airplanes were not supposed to fly with hands off, nor were they expected to take dead pilots out of the fight. All they were

made to do was fly. They did that; and the human hand—and foot—was necessary. And those hands and feet had to be quick, not dead. However, one case of phantom ship appears in our Air Service records of our A. E. F. doings. It was the case of Lieutenant Don Ticknor.

Ticknor, flying with one of our first Nieuport 28 outfits, had it hung on him while patrolling above our very limited sector of June, 1918. He was somewhere between Metz and St. Mihiel at the time. It was during the period when the German line was a full bellied thing bloated in such a manner as to crowd Verdun and Reims, take in Laon, St. Quentin and Cambrai, and threaten Arras and Ypres almost beyond the rashest hope of English resistance. It was at a time when Allied air knew too few brave ships, and Germany was on top.

Ticknor's Nieuport 28 did what it did because Ticknor had worked on it. He had been an enlisted man with one of Uncle Sam's before-the-war squadrons. He knew planes. In his spare time Ticknor nursed that 28, its rigging and motor, with a care that was exceptional. He knew that ships could be made to fly *good;* and he was out to make his craft fly *best.* Up till the time the enemy put him out of the running, Don Ticknor bored everybody to death telling what a fine flying crock he had.

Anyway, of all wartime pursuit machines, the Nieuport 28, no doubt, was the prettiest handling—that is, aside from the curse of its motor troubles and fire hazard. The 28 would fly better, accidentally, than other scout planes did after endless work. And if the Nieuport 28 did anything well, they will tell you, it had to be accidentally.

But the 28 had everything that made for good flying. Its tail was long: fine leverage for control action. And the control surfaces were comparatively large: good for "maneuverability." So, giving a little attention to its rigging, it was not hard to bring your 28's handling close to perfection. Also, the ship was light and well powered. Ticknor had a good mount. No use talking; if he was not sitting pretty, then the other men of his squadron sure had cause for grief. They had Nieuports just as Nieuports came; some good and others bad. Yet it was Don Ticknor who came out of battle not knowing it. And, coming out that way, he went back. Not knowing that, either.

On the June morning in question, Lieutenant Don Ticknor, because of a cloudy sky, was flying free lance. He had been sent, or rather allowed, out alone, to see what he could see. Near Metz, Captain Zobell, commanding a German group of three planes, jumped Ticknor. The Yank never had a chance. But before the enemy captain had time to crack down on the American, one of his followers, a Sergeant Voigt, almost cross-firing his captain, had dived in and riddled the Nieuport. For that reason, after the Germans had returned to their airdrome, the captain, Zobell, was sure that the Nieuport had been bagged. Wasn't the captain nearly bagged with it? He put young Voigt on the carpet, then had the sergeant make out his patrol report and ask confirmation for one Nieuport. He and the other flight mates attested to the kill.

Try as they did, though, the Germans could not find that plane. It had been riddled behind their lines, well behind too. But all the telephoning on earth, during that first hour after landing, would bring no information. All points of command, in that area, said that no enemy craft had been reported. It was quite possible—Captain Zobell's commanding officer laughed—that Herr Captain only dreamed that his sergeant scored a win.

Nevertheless, Captain Zobell and Sergeant Voigt felt that they had not been dreaming. They were sure that the Nieuport pilot—French or American—had been shot out of control. They had been so close. Why, the captain could see the pilot's hand drop from the control stick. He even remembered seeing the victim's left hand slide away from the cockpit's cowling where it had been rest-

ing. The captain was sure; and the captain was right.

TICKNOR had been shot. The whole thing was merciful; and the Yank never knew what struck him. But the 28's gas tank or motor had not been touched; and the rightly rigged ship went into the west on its own. The motor had been turning full power under the last minutes of Ticknor's living hand. That full power, of course, continued. It was early in his flight, so all of two hours' gas supply remained. Till the gas or oil became exhausted, or till the red hot rotary engine burned itself out, the flight might be expected to go on. And records show that it did.

Observers at a Yank drome near Toul say that the ship was at ten thousand when it passed a little bit north of that city. They also say that a slight south wind was causing it to bear off to the north. They only thought that the pilot was trying to fly around a cloud bank that hung black and low off toward the lines. That the ship was alone was the only reason its course was noted.

Passing Chalons, the phantom ship was still at ten thousand feet and going toward the lines. The south wind was easing its course back toward enemy territory. Beyond Chalons, off in the direction of Reims and the Vesle, the sky was heavy with clouds. Into these clouds Don Ticknor's Nieuport went.

Near Laon, and from there through St. Quentin, Peronne and Cambrai, the flying visibility was better, and French and enemy squadrons were on the wing. A French squadron, operating between Sedan and Soissons, later reported that this strange ship had passed in such a manner as to break up their formation. The pilot, they said, seemed to be asleep. The reckless Yanks should be reprimanded! Such unbecoming action! Crazee! *Oui!*

Observers east of Compiègne said that the plane dared anti-aircraft fire south of St. Quentin in a manner such as they had never before seen. And there was plenty of anti-aircraft in that neck of the woods, aircraft batteries by the score. Yet the Yank airman went through without a zigzag; and, off toward Peronne, where a group of three German observation balloons had been doing business, and directing heavy guns for days, these same French watchers saw the lone Nieuport attack. Straight at the balloons, through that hell of anti-aircraft fire, he had gone. At the last second, the crews of those three German bags had gone overside. Two of the parachutes had failed: two dead German observers had gone back to Mother Earth. The ground crew on one of the bags, working with too much haste, had snapped a cable. The balloon, with its crew overside, went free.

The lone plane, instead of firing its guns, had passed on between two of the bags. The French reported this as strange. The pilot continued in his flight behind enemy lines. He was at, perhaps, three thousand feet. Such rash pilots, these Americans! If they wish to suicide, why is it that they do not jump from the cockpit?

With the noon of the day coming on, and cooler breezes blowing down from Calais and the North Sea, a still greater change of direction came to Don Ticknor's Nieuport between Cambrai and Mons. When it passed the latter city, it was somewhat to the south and headed almost east. An English bombing squadron, flying at eight thousand feet and covered by pursuit protection up near the ceiling saw him pass.

"Crazy blighter," they later reported. "Following the old Hun line where there's all kinds of anti-aircraft. And he was following it low. Had a squadron of enemy pursuit ships on his ruddy tail. However, way down there at about three thousand feet, that Yank or Frenchman was better than holding his own. Outrunning the Hun, that's what he was doing. Crazy blighter, nevertheless."

They say that Ticknor had two or three German outfits on his tail when his Nieuport passed points half an hour be-

yond Mons. Maybe that is exaggerated, for it does not seem possible that more than a few would take up such a chase. However, finding a bird willing to run such a race, against such odds, it is likely that any number were willing to oblige.

That the phantom ship had company over most of this flight is certain, according to the German air records. They saw it here, telephoned ahead there, and tried to head it off everywhere. It became a problem with them. Its short life was filled with suspense and doubt; and had there been more than one ghosting craft, it is likely that Germany might have called it a day and ended the war. What were they to do? An enemy should have some fear. Also, he should observe some rules of the game. But not this flashing, roaring freak. Not by a long shot! *Hoch! Hoch!* This man had no sense. But he could not go on forever. Two hours—a few hundred miles—was his limit. Then what?

Well, that was a question. But it was not bothering Don Ticknor.

They say that a person lost in a woods will travel in circles; and it must be tough to be lost in a woods. It is likely that an airplane, likewise lost, will travel in circles too. Pity a poor cloud ship with no hand to guide it. At the end of his second phantom hour, Don Ticknor's Nieuport 28—crazy ship that it was—had completed a very large turn of the front. And it was just about done with its weird batting and birding.

AT ABOUT that same time Captain Zobell, with Flight Sergeant Voigt, was walking toward the lineup of planes on their German 'drome. They were about set to get under way on a second patrol. The captain and sergeant were still puzzled about the morning, and their futile effort to prove that they had seen an enemy Nieuport driven from active service. For these two fighting men, the war had gone sour. They were getting the German equivalent of the American razzberry; and getting it from all sides. The Teuton, moreover, does not stand up so well under the razz as does the Yank. The captain and the sergeant were just about ready to fight each other.

Of a sudden, the sergeant pointed to the northeast with great excitement in the gesture. He, at the same time, said whatever it is that a German sergeant says when he says nothing. But anyway, the captain looked. Six or seven kilometers away, off where these men were now looking, a Nieuport was obviously coming down for a landing. What was more to the point, as the two German airmen knew so well, that Nieuport was going to land in a place where there was no possible landing space. At this they were surprised. The sergeant spoke a lot of German. Translated into the English, by Larry O'Neill of the 10th American Aero Squadron, this lot of German meant—

"Captain, I should hope to eat your mess-kit if that there ain't one of them said Nieuports of which we've been speaking during the past few hours."

The captain said—also translated from the German by the same Larry O'Neill:

"Sergeant, I'm a cockeyed officer in town if you ain't right. That there, I have a hunch, is the very same Nieuport as we two *hombres* were talking about—I'm a blowed up baby if it ain't!"

The two then noticed that half the German air force was on that poor Nieuport's tail. Half the Imperial flying army was, at least, within a few kilometers of said tailpiece. Then these two watched that Nieuport pass lower than the trees and end its tour of Europe. The following ships came up, wheeled and circled above the place where the prey had gone down.

In that small hamlet among the trees, where the captain and sergeant knew a landing plane could find no place to land, a few people had watched Don Ticknor's Nieuport glide down from the sky. Its motor was stopped: the gasoline was gone. The incoming ship was headed straight for a farmhouse. When it arrived down on the farm, the plane cleared the

ridgepiece of the farmhouse roof. But the landing gear was a little too low. The wheels and light undercarriage struts stayed on the ridge. The ship went ahead.

The Nieuport, passing over the house, picked a fair sized duckpond for its final landing spot. When it hit that pond, it met the surface of the water with wings flat. Its momentum pushed half the water—and all the ducks—out of the pond. Then, still flat on its belly, the plane skidded high up on the south bank of the mire. At the end of several minutes, the watching farmers made brave to come alongside. The man at the controls was still on the job. They wondered why he took no more interest in his peculiar position. Well, maybe flying men were all like this and not easily excited. It seemed natural enough to expect.

Seven weeks to a day after they took Don Ticknor to a base hospital, the boy began to show the first signs of returning life. He had been hit six times. One of those slugs had paralyzed a certain nerve center which, according to the German doctors, made of the whole thing a very interesting case. They cheered aloud when the Yank moved for the first time. During the second month, his voice came back. The fourth month he celebrated by walking with canes.

The French, habitually, decided to hang a *Croix de Guerre* upon Don's chest for his good work in wrecking the morale of three German balloons. Don Ticknor's commanding officer—almost the only Yank C. O. who had not a *Croix de Guerre*—objected.

"But why?" the Frenchman in charge of the thing asked.

"Lieutenant Ticknor," the C.O. argued, "had nothing to do with what was going on. He does not deserve this award, in view of the facts."

"*Non! Non! Non!*" the Frenchman yelled. He was not going to have a *Croix de Guerre* go begging. "It is, sir, that we have *beaucoup de Croix de Guerre.* Boxes and boxes of them. The lieutenant gets one, and why not, may I ask?"

The giver of bronze waved his arms, hunched his shoulders, and made the standard questioning moue.

"A *Croix de Guerre* with ze palms or ze star or ze—"

"Ze hell!" the Yank C.O. barked. "If you give this guy a *Croix de Guerre* it will be only on one condition. That one condition is that there be no palm, no star, but a horseshoe."

"Ah, *oui, oui, oui!*" the Frenchman agreed. "Or that other great American emblem. What is it you call heem, sir, ze, ah, ze—"

"Dumbbell!" the C.O. supplied.

"Ah, yes! Ze dumbbell! A *Croix de Guerre* with ze horse's shoe—and ze dumbbell. Ah, *oui!*"

Lieutenant Don Ticknor got it.

Pampa TRAGEDY

By

EDGAR YOUNG

A HORSE neighed plaintively. The Tehuelche casique lifted his head from the work in his lap and stared out of the dim *toldo* and across the broken pampa. Some of the horses in sight had stopped picking and were standing with heads lifted. As he looked they dropped their heads and began to crop again. The chief dropped his face and went on with his work. Across the embers from him the grown son of the old man bent Turk fashion over a curved board he was polishing with a stone rasp. Further back in the darker recesses of the big lodge the squaws of the two men knelt over some skins they were trimming. Behind the toldo the children romped.

Again a horse neighed. Somewhere down the line of lodges a dog howled mournfully. The young man looked up and met his father's gaze. The old man arose and walked outside. The son followed. The two tall men stood, silent, looking and listening.

The line of skin lodges ranged in an uneven row north and south, all facing east. Smoke drifted out of the entrances from the fire just within. Dogs wandered in and out. Clumps of horses were in sight off to the east, feeding on the tough pampa grass. Far off beyond them a guanaco topped a rise, running at full tilt, paused and turned to look back.

"I will go and see who they are," growled the son in throaty Ahonica.

The actions of the animals had told the two men a plain story. Others of the nomads had read the story truly and were stalking out to look and listen.

The young man stripped off his robe, snatched down a light bridle from a peg and trotted off toward the horses in his ocher dyed puma skin trunks and *potro* boots. The white stallion threw up his head and waited quietly for the man to approach. The nomad thrust the rawhide bit into the beast's mouth, jerked the chin thong tight and in a moment galloped off out of sight into the east. The old man stood, waiting, gaunt and erect as a statue in his long red robe, looking off in the direction his son had taken. His iron gray hair reached to his shoulders and a single thong of rawhide passed around his head at the forehead to keep it from blowing into his eyes. His seamed, tanned, weather hardened face was without a spear of beard. The beard like the eyebrows had been carefully plucked with bone tweezers.

The white stallion loomed into sight, running full speed into the wind with the rider crouching low over its withers. The casique stalked forward a few paces. The stallion came to a sliding stop and the rider leaped to the ground. A few guttural words passed between father and son and the old man stalked back to the front of the *toldo*. At the first few words of his oration men and boys were scrambling from the lodges and running off toward the grazing nags.

II

A MOTLEY cavalcade jogged to the west in the teeth of the keen wind. The horses were shaggy and uncurried. The nondescript riders were garbed in various ways. Here and there was a renegade gaucho with ponchos about his shoulders and legs, hatless and long-haired or with peaked felt hat pulled low. There were ex-soldiers from the Argentine and Paraguay still wearing their tattered uniforms, a Brazilian *coboclo* or two, Chilians, and outlaws from Oriental. A bad lot these men. A villainous crowd bent on villainous work. Men with eyes missing, faces scarred. Men with low foreheads, protruding teeth. Men with shifty glance and animal cunning in every facial expression. Dirty, greasy, vile, low, the scum of southern South America.

Hunched on their half wild mustangs they peered into the wind as they rode toward the west. The ears and nose of an Indian were redeemable for five pesos at the headquarters of the Sheep Raisers Association in Buenos Aires. These men were out to kill Indians to get this small bounty, little more than two dollars in U. S. coin. Yet for them it was easier than working. Tied to each man's belt was a greasy sack with a grisly content. These were the ears and noses of small bands of Abipones and Pampas they had encountered on the expedition. The government of the land winked at the custom. Indians were *infieles*, not human folk.

Some of the nags were laden with packs and water kegs. For weeks at a time the hunters wandered here and there. An Indian of any tribe was their meat, for there is no telling from the nose and ears. They camped in tattered tents and moved along, nomads themselves for the time with murder in their hearts.

They jogged along, casting evil glances at one another and at the broken pampa ahead. Their dogs slunk behind the horses. The horses seemed uneasy and tossed their heads about and snorted.

The bounty hunters began to notice the smoke arising in the west. A bearded gaucho stopped his horse and stood up in the saddle to peer with shaded eyes. The others rode up and spoke back and forth in grunts as they looked. It was certainly an Indian camp.

"These will be Tehuelches," growled the gaucho in Spanish, dropping into his saddle again.

"Aye, and a total of several score, they and their squaws," agreed the rider at his side.

The others huddled around the speakers in a cluster for a moment. The bearded gaucho whirled his head about and looked into the tense faces. He himself was half Indian.

"They are a warrior tribe. Neither do they steal. Better we leave them be, no?" he questioned.

A volley of rude guffaws answered him.

"Ho, ho! Pedro has grown timid. Brave Indians! And honest ones! Whoever heard the like?" a rider in the rear shouted.

A great laugh went up. The gaucho whirled his horse and faced them.

"You will find it as I say. *Pero que importa! Vamanos!*"

He whirled his horse again and cantered toward the leaning columns of rising smoke. The mob of horsemen followed.

In spite of brave laughs eyes were roving furtively. Ponchos were thrown back to expose carbines thrust into boot tops. Pistol holsters were hitched forward so that the long barreled cap and ball weapons were ready to their hands. Men felt time and again for the handle of the

curved knives thrust sidewise in their belts at the rear. They were as heavily armed as pirates on horseback.

The smoke ahead loomed clearer. They could smell the acrid wood smoke in the wind. Across a shallow cañon they trotted and up a slight hill on the other side. Ahead on top of the next hill was a lone Tehuelche horseman sitting on a white horse.

He saw them approaching and lifted both arms high over his head in question as to their business. A friendly party would immediately send forth a *chasqui* to serve as hostage during the visit. The bounty hunters paused and jabbered for a moment.

"Let the fool have a ball and we will follow him at a gallop," blurted a voice. Three carbines belched lurid flames and bullets whanged into the ground near the rider, sending up puffs of dust. The Indian dropped his arms and whirled his horse. Other carbines banged. The Tehuelche disappeared over the hill at the left at a mad gallop, crouching low over his horse's neck. The bounty hunters dug in their spurs, lashed their mustangs with the quirts and followed at breakneck speed.

At the top of the hill where the Indian had been they came in sight of the *toldos*. But the rider had disappeared from view. Dogs were running out and barking furiously, but horses and men were not in sight.

A man glanced behind and gave a yell. The Tehuelches had flanked them and were now riding full tilt upon them from the rear. The hunters whirled their horses in a mad scramble and charged toward the oncoming Indians. In the shallow valley they had just crossed the battle began to wage. It was a battle fought on horseback at full speed.

Guns began to bang and pistols to spit. The Indians had no firearms. But the aim of galloping men at swerving, galloping targets is but poor. Heavy stones at the ends of nine foot thongs hurtling through the air like chain shots are more deadly. A rider swooping in can brain another with a single stone on a long string. Bolas, slingshots and lariats were whistling through the air. Flint knife and steel knife clashed.

Bloodthirsty shouts. Screams of pain from men and horses. Drumming of hoofs on the hard ground. The banging of guns. The smell of dust and blood, powder and horse sweat. Men pitching to the ground shot dead or with heads crushed. Horses rolling in agony. Men vomiting blood as they dragged themselves about.

It seemed like hours but only a few minutes transpired before the bounty hunters broke to run. Half their number were down. The bearded gaucho gave a shrill yell and spurred his horse toward the east. The survivors of their party followed hell bent. The Tehuelches raced behind them, hurling bolas and shouting. A few more fell. The remaining handful, killing their horses with whip and spur, disappeared into the east.

III

THE SQUAWS had herded the spare horses and pack nags behind the *toldos* and kept them there while the fight was in progress. Each woman and girl was armed with flint knife and slingshot. Some were carrying one or two small children as they worked. Had the fight gone against their men they would have fought to the death against capture. Husky Amazons who drove tent stakes, threw packs upon horses and rode all day, skinned and cut up game, were fierce fighters when need be.

Stolidly they came out to meet the returning men. The warriors were still excited and babbled back and forth in loud tones. The horses were curveting and snorting loudly. A slight grunt or gasp from a squaw was the only sign that she noted the absence of a husband, a brother, or father. There were no hysterics. The women lived life in the rough and looked at things in a simple way. If a husband were killed his squaw went into the lodge of his brother or nearest relative. Two

wives were better than one. It made the work lighter.

The warriors paused on the battlefield long enough to capture and kill the horse of each dead Tehuelche. A man who is lost needs a horse to ride. He also needs a few personal belongings. He will want to smoke his pipe. Men slipped away with small bundles to leave beside the dead. Then they hastened back to the camp.

The old casique was lying in his *toldo* on his back. He managed to ride back with the others without showing signs of injury but he was sorely stricken by a carbine ball that bored through his lungs. Blood was dyeing his body in a slow wave as he cantered into the village. He slipped from his horse and stumbled into his *toldo* without help. Inside he reeled to the ground. The squaws knelt over him for an examination but he shoved them away. He knew the answer to his wound.

The son came in and stood looking down at him. Outside a group gathered and waited, murmuring together in low tones. The old man was well liked. He was a good leader and his great age linked them to the past. He was the last one of the old, old foot migrating lot left alive.

Gritty, game, tough as an old pine knot, he had never admitted the symptoms of age in any form. His good judgment, his fairness, his appeal to their pride had kept them from seeking work on the sheep and cattle ranches of the Spanish settlers, to rot and die as a subject race.

He lay there heaving as the blood in his lungs slowly strangled him. Yet he was game. A fierce fire shone in his black eyes. The white bones showed through his eagle nose at the bridge as the nostrils dilated. He turned slowly on his side and looked out the door. The group stared in at him.

He whirled on his face and shoved upward with his hands until he was on his knees. With a great lurch he came to his feet. Slowly he staggered outside. The pain almost doubled him down as he faced the group. He coughed out a mouthful of blood and stood erect again. He then faced eastward. His eyes were dimming but he stared to the east.

His father had told him something about the east. He had never quite understood it. The old-timers had also faced their lodges east. They did it when the wind was in the south. They did it when there was no wind. It was a custom arising in the dim antiquity of the race.

He was staring eastward with glazed eyes when he fell forward on his face. The son fumbled at the guanaco robe for a moment. The heart had ceased to beat. The old man was "lost."

The young casique called four men by name and they came forward and lifted the body in their arms. They carried it at a trot out of sight over the hilltop and left it lying on the hillside overlooking the battlefield. The son caught the Arab stallion and led him after the men. The old man should have a good horse to ride in that land of lost folks. Soon the five returned, walking hurriedly and peering backward at intervals.

The dim sun in the west was touching the jagged white Andes. The squaws had pulled the *toldos* down and had the packs upon the pack animals. It would never do to remain the night in this place. Gualichu, the demon, would surely be lurking about.

The young casique drew himself erect for the first oration. His lean, keen face was solemn. His beaked nose, high cheekbones, keen eyes and firm mouth were those of a leader of men.

"We pull stakes and move until darkness. There we camp. Tomorrow we hunt the breakfast that is running wild on the pampa. We are men and we do as men."

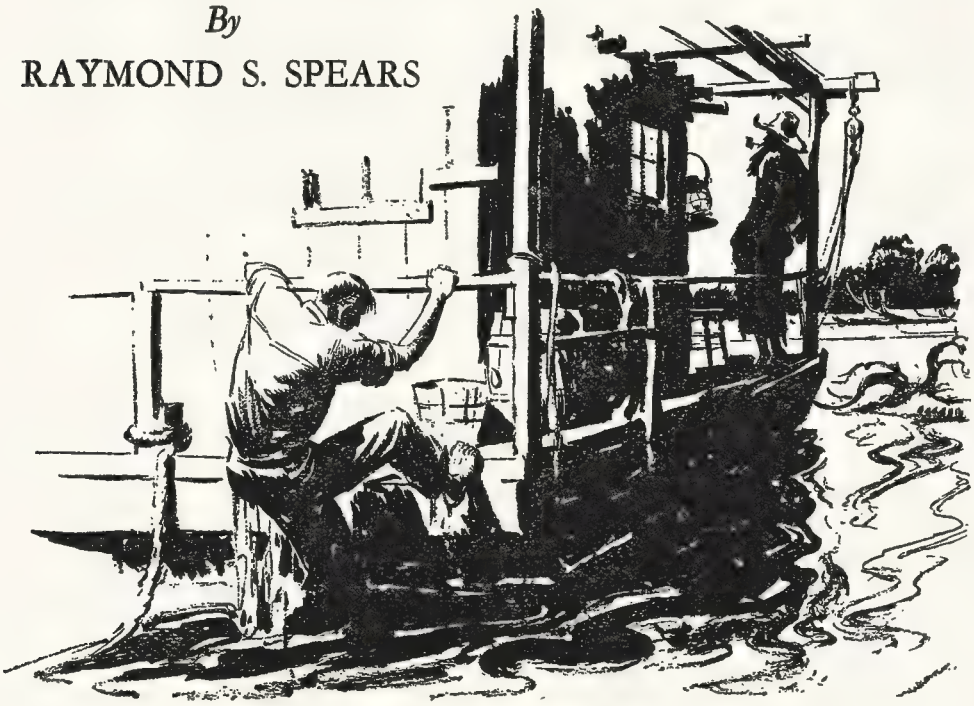
"*Ahon*," droned the hearers in the customary amen.

Twice more he said it and twice more vouchsafed assent. The mystic three had also come to them from dim antiquity.

Men and squaws climbed upon their nags and the nomads moved toward the south. Those in the rear were lashing backward furtively with bolas and doubled lassoes to keep Gualichu from tagging at their heels.

A tale of the Backwaters of Old Mississip'

By
RAYMOND S. SPEARS



A Bad Man

ASLEETY rain was falling on the sandbars and timber brakes in Lost Channels Reach when a man, whose beard was so red it shone like a torch in the blue gray gloom, came down to the little cabin boat moored under the exposed reef where a wave of sand made a bluff bank at the base of which washed a quivering eddy.

"Aboard the boat!" the little man hailed.

The next instant the face of a smiling young softpaw appeared as the door opened.

"My name's Red Huster," the tramper said. "I'm wet, cold an' hongry. I fear I'm catchin' cold, too. I won'ered if you'd lemme sit by yo' fiah to warm?"

The cabin boater's neck was still peeling where the sun had burned him. His face displayed an innocence delightful for the vagabond to see. He had sense, though, which was not so good. He hesitated to give the sandbar tracker the privilege he asked. Still, the day was one of misery, the shabby clothes of the beggar were saturated and the request was hard to refuse.

"All right, old man," the youth nodded. "Come in!"

Red walked aboard down the cleated gangplank, and his pale gray eyes flashed a glance around. He saw a fine iron cot, guns in a corner, two lamps, a hot stove, chairs. He smelled roast meat.

"Hungry, did you say?" the cabin boater

asked. "Better come out and eat."

Red sat up to the table. A big pot-roast with brown gravy, mashed potatoes, hot bread, apple butter, cow butter, a pot of coffee on the stove— Pshaw! This fellow must be rich. Red ate as heartily as he could, considering how recently he had picked the meat off a canvasback and eaten its stuffing.

"I be'n hongry so long I don't dast to eat too much," Red explained his refusal of a larger second helping. "Afteh a feller's be'n 'thout nothing much two, three days, he best not wolf it down too fast. I learned that by 'sperience."

"Why, you must have had a lot of hard luck!" the tripper said. "If you've learned that, it must have been a hard life."

"Yes, suh," Red replied. "I ain't heavy enough for roughneckin'. I'm too iggerent for white collar jobs. When you ain't rich an' are kinda betwixt an' between thataway, 'course, they ain't much yer good for."

"But you could study! You'd learn! You're not old!"

"No, suh. Jes' unlucky. I come from down East, too. Feller said I stoled a wad of money. He'd done hit hisse'f, an' turned around an' said I done hit. I'd always be'n his best friend. He'd shoved the roll into my coat pocket. First I knowed they found it theah. The only good break I had, I ducked through a window out'n the justice's court—nothin' but his parlor. I circled round, hit a freight an' come down Ol' Mississip'! That feller got his, though. Man come down thisaway I use t' know told me 'bout him. He pulled a coupla alibis an' got two friends of his'n in dutch. Next he was caught dead to rights, convicted—two years—an' then he was killed robbin' a chicken coop. Everybody suspected he'd framed me, but I neveh went back. Went to work on log rafts, but they don't float many logs nowadays. Waterboy, cook's help, waitin' on table, lunch counter work—anything to make a living. Had a nice boat last winter, good outboard, fine outfit, an' one night I went 'coon hunting. Needed meat. Come back the bank'd caved in, my boat was tore loose, sunk an' gone adrift. Three years' work gone to Hades! Oh, well! I'm one of those that have t' expect them things. Let me wash the dishes, mister? I'm sure grateful!"

"Oh, you don't need to! Sit by the fire and warm!"

"No, suh! I'm goin' to *do* something!"

"Well, if you feel that way about it, we'll do them together!"

The two scraped the dishes, put away the eatables and went to work washing the things with hot water from a big teakettle singing on the big kitchen stove.

"My name's Jim Morton," the cabin boater remarked. "I graduated from school last June and now I'm floating down the Mississippi. I wanted the experience. Found at home I knew so much I hadn't digested I thought the river trip would help me find perspectives on my attainments."

"Yes, suh!" the visitor sighed. "I neveh had but grade school an' first term in high school. All I thought I knew I've forgot."

RED CARRIED the dishpan out to empty it. He wiped it and brought it in to hang up. The galley was all slick. Everything was shipshape. Morton stooped over the table to wash out the drying clothes and Red drew a slingshot, as big as a small duck egg, on a long, limber staging. He reached and brought it down on the cabin boater's head, just behind the ear. Morton slumped over, slid off the table and landed on the galley deck like a limp bag of potatoes.

"Theah!" Red remarked with satisfaction. "That job's done!"

Catching his victim by the back of the stout woolen shirt, he dragged him out on the stern deck. He went through his pockets carefully and found, with satisfaction, a horsehide money belt around the waist. Watching, Red saw that no one was in sight in that lonely reach. He gazed at the unconscious figure.

"You'd think they'd learn better," he muttered contemptuously. "They always fall for it. Be'n doin' hit eveh sinct old Indian prisoner days. Jes' iggerent up-the-bankers! They make a man sick. Graduated las' spring! Why, they don't know nothin'!"

Red cast off the lines of the cabin boat, swung out from the steep slope of the bluff reef and drifted toward the main channel with the eddy current. When he reached the swirls he leaned into his sweeps and pulled out a few yards which he thought was far enough. There he scornfully dumped the cabin boater overboard and pulled back into the eddy.

"Hit's always best to pitch 'm into the main channel," he explained to himself. "Hit's a fallin' tide an' he'll float down the middle a hell of a ways. I'll hit into the eddy again an' go up an' git my boat. My land! This was plumb ridiculous, hit's so easy!"

He landed, tied to the same snag and headed back on the sandbar. Up at the head, in the next west bank eddy, he found a fine natural wood varnished skiff. On the stern was a bright new aluminum outboard motor, big enough to handle a thirty foot shantyboat, let alone the twenty-four footer which he had just acquired. Over the skiff were brown waterproof hoods, on cane poles bent in half circles and held in gunwale staples.

Red shoved out and tried to start the motor. He had not really got used to his outfit yet. He had not stolen it. He had come by it honestly, trading some cameras and a diamond ring which he had obtained in a bit of business away yonder. The man he traded with was a store boater who knew exactly what he was about, receiving a thousand dollars in questionable trade goods for about three hundred and fifty dollars in legitimate outfit, that had cost a hundred dollars when a softpaw sold out and went up the bank again. Both parties in the transaction of Red and the store boater were satisfied.

"Now I got a good shantyboat," Red smiled to himself. "An' a good tender, an' a motor in case I want a tow. Pshaw! This here outboard turns easy, but I cain't seem to hit it off good."

He floated around and around in the eddy, and finally was so disgusted he took a pair of oars and rowed out to float down the crossing in the current. Down at the foot of the sandbar he swung into the bar reef eddy and paddled to the stern of the shantyboat, where he dropped the painter over a cleat, pulled up the hood he had folded and, standing on the stern deck, stretched comfortably, yawning after his now completed operation.

Then he walked in at the kitchen door.

Two wet hands gripped him around the neck and locked together on him. Red raised his arms above his head and knocked his clenched fists together in strangling agony. He could not shake his head, and so great was his surprise he could not kick. He hardly had time to wonder what had happened, when his own light went out as he saw purples and whites, blacks and blues, flames of horror in his vain struggle against that terrific, relentless grasp.

WHEN Red came to he was lying out on the sand. The wind and rain were beating him. His throat was as sore and swollen as if he had been hung by the neck till unconscious. He was so weak and his lungs so flabby and painful that he could only just gasp, squirm and twist about in physical protest against the misery which was his—raw, chill, abused and full of terror as he was. Presently he managed to sit up.

He looked around. He was on a sandbar. He recognized the place. Right by him was a big snag to which the shanty boat had been lashed by two lines. He turned, painfully, hardly able to move his head on his shoulders. The boat was gone.

"So's my skiff!" He started up angrily. "He stoled my skiff! He fooled me! He didn't drownded! He jes' tricked me! The dad-blasted, treacherous scoundrel!

He jes' pretended! He swum back in th' eddy!"

Red whimpered. The world was all wrong. There he had had everything all fixed and right, according, a nice honorable skiff with a hood and outfit and everything! Now that miserable, no account scoundrel had taken everything.

"Danged piratin' sneak!" Red choked. He felt his neck and found it swollen, dug into by fingernails, the hide practically loosened and worn rough. "Anybody's liable to fool a feller!"

Red shuddered and turned back into the timber brake. He circled the edge of the sandbar and headed off down the bend. He was wet. He was sore. He was shaking with misery. Came night and he crawled into a hollow log to sleep in raw comfort. In the morning he found a fisherman's tent on a bayou, where he begged a few cold biscuits and half a cold carp, which he had to eat as he tramped along. The fisherman knew river rats and did not have a seat for anybody.

Days of storm were followed by sunny days. He scavenged the Bottoms. He ate hickory nuts. He drove a team of mules with the negroes on a levee job, and he found a hogpen on a scow, leaky above and below, which some one had abandoned. He caulked the seams with rags torn out of his own coat lining. He found a jumpline which he dared to steal, and sold a few fish.

In a week he was floating again, but cooking over a sandbox. Another storm caught him and he came in the dripping gloom to an eddy the limits of which he could not see for the thick murk. He was blurry eyed, anyhow, and he wept.

Red landed and dragged his scow out, for he lacked a handy line to tie it with. When he straightened up he saw a shantyboat, red hull and white cabin. For a minute he thrilled with the hopeful possibilities of that fine looking outfit. The next instant he noticed a skiff dangling from the stern bumper cleat of the shantyboat. The skiff's stern was toward him, where he had moored down the reverse current but upstream from the other craft that was landed in. It was covered with a double hood.

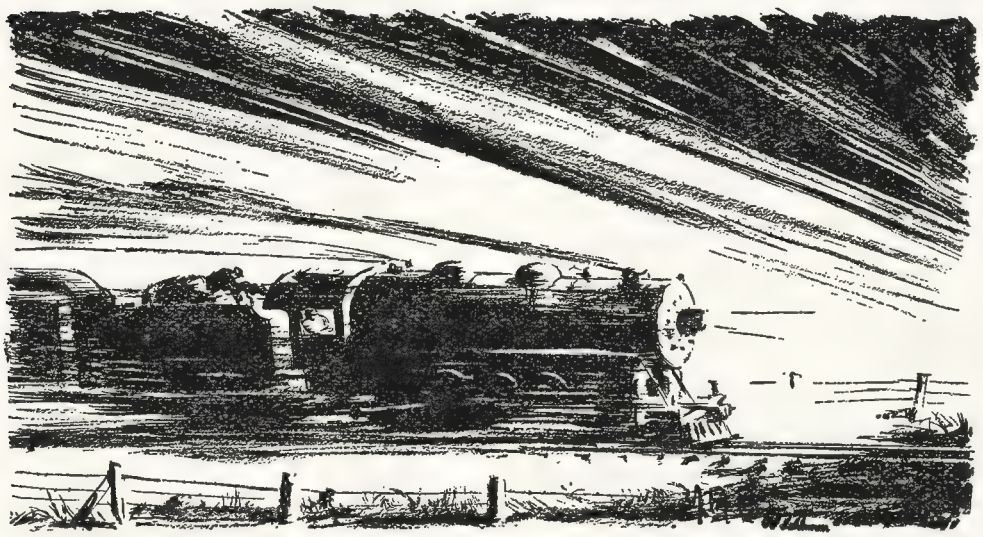
Red squinted. He wiped his eyes and stared.

"Hit's that dad-blasted scoundrel who choked me!" he mumbled. "This riveh ain't big 'nough for both 'n us! I don't see what he wanted to be heah for, anyhow! Damn blast him! 'Course'f he saw me h'ed think sunthin'!"

Red wearily shoved out into the eddy, paddled swiftly out into the main current and, stooping low, watching the shantyboat, all the time ready to duck, he floated down the crossing.

"Next time he mout shoot!" Red sighed. "I'm sick of him! He's bad!"

BLUNDERS *by* E. S. DELLINGER



A Story of a Veteran of the Railroads

OLD MATT GAFFNEY walked uncertainly into the superintendent's office, doffed his black cloth cap, and ran a wrinkled, twisted right hand through his fringe of white hair. His faded blue eyes rested questioningly upon the broad back of his division superintendent.

"Be through in a minute, Mr. Gaffney," greeted the official kindly. "Have a chair."

"All right, Mr. Brown. All right, sir," returned the old engineer respectfully.

He sat fidgeting in his chair while the superintendent read a dozen letters, signed them and deposited them in a desk tray. He was fidgeting because Brown had sent for him that morning.

When the superintendent sends the caller for a man there is usually some reason for the fidgets. About the only time a road man is ever sent for is when he has overlooked an order, or torn up some rolling stock, or failed to have his watch inspected, or laid out a passenger train, or pulled some other unforgivable blunder.

Now the caller's having come for Old Matt early that morning was unusual. Old Matt held the unique record of never having been called to the office to answer for a blunder. In all the fifty years of his service he had never made a mistake which demanded explanation. Blundering was against his philosophy. When he had been called to the office it was to intercede for, or to help educate some fellow workman whose blundering had got him on the official carpet. But as far as Matt knew, there was nobody on the carpet. There had not been an accident of any sort on the division for a couple of months. The only thing of unusual nature which had broken the peace of division life recently was the visit of the medical inspection corps the week before. Maybe . . .

The official chair squeaked on its swivel and swung about.

"Fine day, Uncle Matt."

"Bunk!" thought the old hoghead. Brown had not called him to the office to talk about the weather. "Sure is, Mr. Brown. Finest fall weather we've had sence the war was over."

The Red Bonnet Special thundered past the office and ground to a stop in front of the brick station. Brown looked out at it and drummed nervously on his desk with a glass paperweight. Matt straightened his stooped back and craned his neck trying to catch the number of the engine—1537.

Ten Pullmans disgorged their well dressed crowds to hurry into the eating house. When only a dozen passengers remained on the platform staring curiously about them, Brown cleared his throat and began.

"It's about that inspection we had last week, Uncle Matt—those sight and hearing tests they pulled on the men."

The big voice was a bit husky, and it was low, unusually low for Superintendent Brown. It was little more than a whisper.

"Well?"

The old man's beetling gray eyebrows drew together in a frown.

"Their report on you showed—showed that— Oh, well, our whiskered expert said you couldn't see as well as you used to, Uncle Matt," blurted the super finally. "Says you can't tell colors worth a damn, an' that you can't see—"

"I see—I see," interrupted the old hoghead. "They say I got to quit runnin' an' take my pension?"

"Yes. Yes, that's it exactly."

Brown was thankful for the old man's help. It made his task easier than he had expected.

"They say you ought to have been pulled out of service four, maybe five years ago. Sure did eat a hunk out of us division officials for keepin' you on the job like we have. They—"

"They're a lot o' fools, Mr. Brown. Nothin' but a lot o' blunderin' fools. They're crazy about red tape, too crazy to use good sense. They ain't a one of 'em ever stopped to figger out what really causes the accidents on the railroads." The engineer paused a bit, then continued, "Not one wreck out of ten thousand's caused by eyes or ears. Most of 'em's caused by fellers fergittin' their business and blunderin'; jist blunderin', pure cussed blunderin'. That's what I've preached here fer fifty year, an' I aim to stick by it. They got to dig down deeper'n the eyes to test out the cause of railroad accidents. They got to test the head an' see what's a workin' inside of it. Did you tell your experts that, Mr. Brown?"

The old man leaned forward and looked eagerly at his superintendent. He had been preaching that philosophy as long as Brown could remember. Brown chewed the stub of his unlighted cigar.

"No. No, we didn't tell them that. But we did tell them about your record here on the Ozark Division; told 'em how you'd run an engine all these years and never overlooked an order nor run a red board. We told 'em that and made it strong. Then when we got through . . ."

Brown lighted the cigar and flipped the match into the cuspidor. The 1564 backed down and coupled into the Red Bonnet.

"But when we got through, that smart doctor looked over his specs and said, 'Well, Mr. Brown, if your man's made such a wonderful record, now's a good time to make him quit—a damned good time—before he pulls a boner that makes up for all his fifty years' flirting with the law of chance. You pull him out of service as soon as he gets back into Winfield.' That's what he said, Uncle Matt, so—"

"When—when you goin' to make me quit, Mr. Brown?"

"Right away, Uncle Matt. Right away. I told the caller this morning to advertise your run and send you up to the office. We—"

The old man was on his feet. He took a step toward the superintendent.

"Let me—I want to stay a few more days, Mr. Brown. Jist six days more. I been a-runnin' fifty year next Sunday

night. This is Tuesday. I want to fill out my even fifty year."

A freight train came into the yards calling for a signal. A switch engine coughed along the track and a flange squealed against a rail. Brown sat watching the car whackers working about the Red Bonnet. He drummed again on the desk with the paperweight. Old Matt thrust his gaunt, bony frame forward, staring eagerly into the face of his superintendent while he awaited the answer. That answer meant much to him. It meant the achievement of another milestone on his narrow path of life. His faded blue eyes bore a plea that the kind hearted Brown could not resist.

"But suppose, Uncle Matt, suppose—Oh, hell!" He snapped the half burned cigar into the cuspidor. "Go ahead if it'll do you any good. Work the rest of this week, but for heaven's sake, do be careful. If anything should happen after that roll of red tape orders those birds left us, it would sure go hard on the white folks."

"I know, Mr. Brown. I know, an' I shore appreciate your kindness. You don't know what it means to me to be able to go ahead fer jist the rest o' this week. I . . ."

Brown turned his head and watched the string of Pullmans gathering speed as the Red Bonnet pulled out of the yard. He did not again address the old engineer.

At the door Old Matt paused long enough to say:

"Sunday night, Mr. Brown, and thank you. And don't you lose no sleep over me."

He closed the door and was gone.

IT WAS Sunday night. The last trip was done—well done. He had brought the Sunnyland Limited in for the last time—had made up twelve minutes lost time, at that. A car man uncoupled the 1537 from the Sunnyland, and Old Matt took a last lingering glance at the crack train of the G & P system, standing there in front of the station, lights playing about her. Then he headed out toward the roundhouse. He rolled by the spur track where the 1542 stood waiting. The instant he had cleared the switch, the 1542 shot out behind him and slipped back to take his place against the Sunnyland. Thirty switch lights met him and passed him by as he headed for the engine yard. The lights about the train faded out behind tank and coal chutes. He headed the engine into the inbound roundhouse track, twisted the brake valve and sat listening to the purr and whistle of escaping air. The slim, glistening mogul came to its screeching stop.

The fireman picked up his scoop and his grip, glanced at the old man, sitting hand atop the Johnson bar, hesitated as if he would speak, then with a sigh turned toward the gangway. Old Matt began fumbling through his pockets, feeling from one to another.

"Shorty!"

The fireman stopped with his foot on the top step. Old Matt peered out from his cavernous eyes and spoke in a low voice.

"Shorty, you got that last order we picked up at Stafford tonight?"

The fireman set down his grip, stood his scoop against the frame of the cab, felt in an overall pocket. He pulled out a crumpled sheet of green tissue, a "19" order—exactly like sixty thousand other orders Old Matt Gaffney had received, read, obeyed and destroyed during his years on the G & P.

"What do you want with that order, Matt?"

"Jist kinda wanted to keep it, Shorty—jist an' ole man's fool notion. I got the first 'un they ever put out fer me. I aim to keep 'em together."

Shorty gulped. Shorty dreaded sob scenes, but somehow he could not avoid the sob feeling tonight. The old man carefully smoothed out the creases, carefully folded the tissue sheet and put it into his overall pocket. Shorty watched in silence for a minute, then turned and

crawled down from the cab. Old Matt removed his grip and lunch pail from the seat box. He stood holding them. Then he set them down on the scooping apron and looked gloomily out of the cab. He was not ready to go to the washroom yet. Wait until Shorty had gone home.

He gazed out across the yards. The switch lights looked a little blurred. He had not noticed it before. Maybe the inspector was right in retiring him. Maybe his eyesight was failing him. Fifty years on an engine. Why, certainly the inspector was right! Now that he noticed it, there seemed to be a mist between him and the street lights. They looked dim. He turned toward the roundhouse, dimly saw the fireman disappear through the door of the washroom. He drew a gloveless hand across his eyes and when it came away, it was moist on the back.

He glanced down at the grip and lunch pail, turned back into the cab, lifted the lid of the seat box and, taking out a handful of cotton waste, wiped his wrinkled hands until they were a glowing red. He opened the firebox door, tossed in the waste, closed it. As he lifted his head, his eyes fell on the torch and oil can on the shelf. He laid a hand on the torch, touched the oil can—old friends, both of them.

An engineer does not oil an engine when he comes in off the road. That is the job of the man who takes it out. But Old Matt lighted the torch, smiling meanwhile a little sheepishly, climbed to the ground and went along squirting black oil on the guides, screwing down grease plugs on the pins. He was killing time.

Green and yellow and red switchlights glowed like disks of living fire. Above them flared the electric street lamps. Mingled with them, dancing like so many fireflies, a half hundred lanterns—switchmen's lanterns, trainmen's lanterns, lanterns of air inspectors and car repairers and checkers and seal clerks—moved incessantly.

ABOVE these twinkling, darting, glowing human signals, backing them far away in the northwest, other signals flashed—streaks of lightning which burned themselves into the very brain, signals which beat back the darkness, yet threatened disaster.

Old Matt shivered. The air was cool. He climbed back into the cab, took a piece of waste and polished the oil can, rubbed coal dust off the bowl of the torch. He set them back on their shelf.

Shorty ought to have gone home by now, he thought. He hoped so, at least. Shorty Meyers had been firing for him close to eight years. He would rather say hello to Shorty in the morning than say good night to him tonight.

Gathering grip and lunchbox, he clambered clumsily down the engine steps. Yes, his eyes were certainly getting bad. He could hardly see the steps tonight. He stumbled over a rail in crossing one of the tracks.

In the washroom Shorty stood before a glass, shaving. Shorty, too, was killing time tonight. Ordinarily he would have gone home. The old man, entering the dingy room, glanced about. George McClelland was there. So were High Perkins and a dozen others. The room seemed to be full tonight—full of men who had learned railroading from him—freight men, passenger men, yard men. Some were getting into work clothes, preparing to go out into the threatening storm. Others, like himself and Shorty, were going home to rest. They turned as one man when he entered, turned and glanced at him, some curiously, some compassionately, some enviously. Conversation was hushed. The old man walked into their midst, nodded to the crowd, dropped pail and grip before his locker, removed his glasses and laid them on the bench.

"Looks like we was goin' to have a storm tonight, boys."

"Yeah. Wish I could go home to bed an' know the dratted caller couldn't come an' roust me out before daylight."

That was High Perkins. High had been called for a drag west at 11:45. He might get to bed by noon tomorrow if he had a good trip. Moreover, High could not get his pension for ten more years.

Shorty Meyers shot him a warning glance. Matt removed some belongings from his old locker.

"Yes. Ye-es, there's some consolation about it, High. Some."

Matt looked out through the dingy window, watched the hostlers turning the 1537 preparatory to running her into the house.

"Be pretty lonesome, though—pretty lonesome."

"You'll soon git used to it, Uncle Matt," put in Big George McClelland quickly. "You can come down to the roundhouse every day an' watch the rest of us poor devils come an' go an' thank Gawd an' the devil you been set free from your eternal slavery to a job railroadin'. That's all it is, Uncle Matt—slavery."

"How long you been railroadin', Granddad?" queried a boomer brakeman irreverently.

"Been runnin' a engine fifty year, son," returned the old man in his kindly voice. "Fifty year tonight. They wanted me to quit a week ago, but I asked 'em to let me stay an' serve out my fifty year."

Matters were beginning to get serious. George McClelland winked understandingly at High Perkins.

"Fifty years an' never made a blunder," he suggested.

He knew that subject was one which always made Old Matt happy—his untarnished record of service on the G & P. The old engineer brightened perceptibly at its mention.

"That's so, boys. That's so. Fifty year. Been in the hospital seventeen times, all because somebody else was always blunderin'. I ain't even killed a chicken with my own carelessness."

He pulled off his dirty shirt, rolled it carefully and dropped it into his grip. Then he stood rubbing his crippled arm, the one he had almost smashed off the time Grundy had given him the lap order.

"Ain't no use makin' blunders all the time, either. Not if you jist watch yer business. Think about your work instid o' thinkin' about somethin' else. That's what causes the accidents, jist blunderin'. Pure cussed blunderin'."

Suspenders hanging, he walked to the wash basin and began scrubbing coal dust and grease off his hands and face. The men exchanged sly winks. Every one of them had heard that philosophy of accidents expounded many a time. They had grown tired of it. They had cussed Old Matt Gaffney and his "blunder preachin'" ever since they had been on the G & P.

Still, his preaching had had its effects. Brown himself said Old Matt Gaffney had done more to keep down accidents on his division than all the demerits and discharges and layoffs he had ever given.

High Perkins and his fireman walked out to hunt up their engine. McClelland lighted a cigar and sat puffing it. The boomer brakeman lay down on the rough bench to catch a nap before going out. Shorty stood leaning against the locker, watching the old man lather his face. The roll of distant thunder filtered through the walls of the dingy washroom, mingled with the noise of the switchyard.

Suddenly the door burst open. The call boy came in, panting and gulping. Something was evidently wrong. The youngster saw Shorty, looked anxiously about the room. The group began crowding toward him.

"Is—is Old Matt Gaffney in here?" he panted.

"Yeah. He's over there washin'." Big McClelland pointed toward the row of basins set against the black wall.

"Mr. Gaffney!" yelled the boy, running to him, neck stretched forward, eyes protruding. "Mr. Gaffney, you're called fer the wrecker *at once*. Gittin' the 1537 right back out."

The old man wiped the suds out of his eyes and stood holding the towel poised on both hands. His faded blue eyes were

fixed searchingly upon the excited face of the youth who told engine crews when to go.

"Some mistake, boy. You ain't callin' me back out. I jist now got in on the Sunnyland. Besides, they've retired me on pension. I've made my—"

"Ain't no mistake neither. Git ready quick. Third No. 4 went through the Green River bridge and piled up in the water, an' there's a lot o' passengers pinned down in the coaches, an' if the river comes up it'll drown the whole bunch, an' they can't git 'em out till the wrecker gits there, an' there's a big rain a-comin' up, an' Ole Man Brown hisself said call you. He said you'd git the big hook to 'em ten minutes quicker'n any other man in Winfield. Hurry up an' le's go. I'll line the switches fer you to git out."

The boy was so excited he forgot to tender the book for the engineer's signature, forgot to call Shorty Meyers. Shorty, however, did not need a call. He was almost ready to go by the time the boy had finished with his explanation. Old Matt crossed the room at four strides, dropping the towel as he ran. He snatched his overalls and jumper from the grip and crawled into them. As he reached for his cap and fumbled for his glasses, Shorty, scoop over his shoulder, slammed the door behind him and ran for the 1537.

BY THE time Old Matt was out of the washroom, hurrying hostlers had the 1537 ready to go. The night foreman, bareheaded and in shirt sleeves, was overseeing the work in person. As Old Matt climbed to the cab, the supply boy came running with cans of oil and grease. Old Matt was thankful that he had oiled his engine when he came in. It would save him five minutes.

He slipped into his place, clicked the reverse three quarters back on its quadrant, eased steam into the cylinders; and the 1537 clanked backward up the lead. On the wrecker track lanterns were flashing and swinging. Their owners were scurrying to position on caboose and bunk car. The head brakeman, standing by the switch, let the engine into the track and coupled it on the short train. The conductor came over with the orders, swung into the cab and handed the engineer his copy.

Everybody was excited and hurried—everybody except Old Matt Gaffney. He checked the number of his one order against the clearance card handed him by the conductor. Then he read the green tissue sheet—his last order. It was simple, a standard form running order which read:

> Engine 1537 will run passenger extra Winfield to Green Bridge with right over all trains, but will wait at
>
> | | | |
> |---|---|---|
> | Winfield | until | 12:21 |
> | Westview | " | 12:33 |
> | Stafford | " | 12:44 |
> | Bowman | " | 12:49 |
> | Ashfield | " | 12:57 |
> | Bandanna | " | 1:04 |
> | Cedarvale | " | 1:13 |
> | Rader | " | 1:23 |
> | Barton | " | 1:34 |

He looked at his watch. He was due five miles out now. He smiled at the thought. They had given him a fast schedule, and then left him minutes which he could make up.

"Is Second No. 4 in, Jack?" he asked the conductor as he dropped the big gold watch back into his pocket.

"No. We don't need to worry any about Second No. 4. We got right over them."

"Sure, I know we got right over them. I was jist wonderin'. Jist wonderin'. I kinda like to know who's lookin' out fer *us*, you know."

A hush had fallen over the Winfield Yards. Switch engines ceased their coughing and barking up and down the lead. No freight cars bumped and rattled; no bells rang or whistles sounded. When some one has blundered, and when the wrecker has been called, everybody keeps out of the way, stands back to give it room. And tonight with wreck and approaching storm, the yard seemed

doubly stilled. Even the *qua-hank-qua-hank!* of laboring air pump and the low brassy whine of escaping steam were muffled and subdued. Only the ominous crash and rumble of quickening thunder came to break the midnight quiet.

Superintendent, trainmaster, roadmaster, with raincoats over arms, came running down to ride the wrecker. Their presence might be needed. A light waved at the rear end of the train. Old Matt answered with two short blasts of his whistle. Three other lights swung the high sign and swung it quick and long. The conductor, dropping to the ground, repeated the signal and trotted back to meet the caboose. The head brakeman climbed to the seat in front of the fireman. A student brakeman, who happened to be working with the freight crew called to handle the wrecker, came to stand in the cab behind Old Matt Gaffney.

Old Matt dropped the Johnson bar into the front corner, sprayed sand under the seven-foot drive wheels, turned steam into monstrous cylinders. With a cough and a shiver, the wrecker started gliding out of the yards. Old Matt looked back, watched the swaying of the heavy crane, the wrecker crane, the Big Hook of the railway, the piece of machinery built to clear away the blunders of railroad men.

Soon the last light of the city had faded behind them. At sixty miles an hour they sped over the shining steel. Summer was bidding goodby to earth with a night of revelry. Sheet lightning played over tree and hill and sleeping farmhouse. Jagged gashes opened in the black sky like portals to the Great Beyond. Rushing with twenty-foot leaps eastward, as if fleeing from storm and ominous threat of disaster, the 1537 alternately hurled showers of glittering sparks upward into the blackness or poured her funnel of smoke into the shimmering light.

"Might as well set down, son."

The engineer moved forward and squeezed against the cab wall to make room for the student brakeman.

"Thanks."

The young fellow perched himself upon the edge of the seat and, reaching an arm behind the old man, gripped the cab window to keep from being thrown to the floor by the lurch and sway of the rushing engine.

Miles melted beneath them. They were nearing Stafford. The lightning died down for a moment. A spark shone somewhere ahead. The spark was lost in another lightning flash, and when it shone again, it was green. Two more green specks flickered just beyond it. That should be Stafford switch and the tail lights of a freight train in the siding. The lone green light passed on the right. The two on the left soon darted behind the boilerhead, and the wrecker was crashing by alongside the freight train. A short distance ahead loomed a flickering torchlight. The torch and three weird, fantastic figures hurried across the track ahead of them. A yell came up out of the night. The freight train was behind them.

They tipped over the grade toward Clear Creek. Smoke whipped back into the cab. Flanges squealed and ground as they bit rails on curves, right and left. Old Matt looked at his watch, wondered where Second No. 4 was. The headlight plowed its furrow, widening downward among the ghostly clumps of oaks, and through the white barren branches of tall sycamores. Lightning played above it, cut in and eclipsed it.

WITHIN the cab the head brakeman dozed fitfully over on the left hand side, heedless alike of the wreck to which they were rushing and of the storm about to break outside. Down in the deck the fireman swung the door to and fro, leaving the cab alternately bright and dark as he filled the firebox for the hill beyond the bridge over Clear Creek. Old Matt sat, his left hand toying with the throttle lever, his bushy gray brows together in the habitual frown of one whose eyes have long sought danger in the distance. He was peering ahead along the track.

"Did you hear what caused the smash

tonight, son?" he called back over his shoulder to the student brakeman.

"Heard somebody say the hoghead run a slow order at Green River."

"Yes—yes, that's jist what I figgered. I had a twenty mile slow order over Green River bridge on First No. 4 tonight. I figgered that Speedy Wall, fool that he was, must 'a' run that order."

Old Matt drew his head inside and looked at the gage glass. Then he returned to his watchful posture. Soon big drops of rain began beating in through the open cab window. He closed the window and peered out through the front.

"That's jist what causes all the accidents, son." The old man spoke as if continuing an interrupted conversation. "Blunderin' — pure cussed blunderin'. There ain't no use in it, neither. Not a bit, if you only watch yer business. See that?"

He pointed to a big scar on his left cheek, visible when the fireman swung the door open.

"Dadburned lazy brakeman tried to flag *me* off the rear end of a caboose one night. That was twenty years ago."

The student nodded his understanding. He made no comment.

"Feel that?"

Old Matt laid the student's hand upon a kneecap.

"That feels like bone. It ain't—it's silver. Freight crew overlooked a order on me one night back in 1901. Three of 'em went to hell then an' there. Come mighty near takin' me with 'em."

He drew from his pocket the green sheet of tissue paper, his running order, his last order. His faded blue eyes traveled slowly down the column of figures. He pulled out his great gold watch, checked time with the order, replaced the green sheet and gold watch in their respective pockets.

"Them's jist a few o' the scars I got, boy. I been in a average of a wreck every three years I been on the job. Every blasted one of 'em was caused by somebody else's blunderin' carelessness. I ain't never caused a wreck myself. Reason is I always watched my business."

A blinding ragged gash suddenly ripped open the sky ahead of the racing wrecker, shone for a full minute, then as suddenly closed. Black night blotted out its persistent yellow image. The water gage lamp was quivering with the speed of the engine. Rain dashed against the window, covered it until Old Matt could not see ahead. He threw open the side window and leaned far out watching the curve. While he looked a strange light played for a few seconds on the wall of the Old Blue Rock Cut, through drops of falling rain. There was no lighting flash. His own headlight still swerved through the forest.

He straightened in his seat. His right hand sought the brake valve. His left closed over the throttle. He hesitated for a brief time. He was on a wrecker in a race against flood. His faded blue eyes watched again for the light on the wall of the cut. It did not come.

"Must 'a' been a headlight," he muttered, half aloud.

His body stiffened. He shoved the throttle close up. Air hissed from the port beneath the brake valve. The fireman leaped to his seat, threw open the window, looked out into the rain. The brakeman sprang up and, looking across at the old man, yelled:

"What's the matter? What's the matter?"

"Be ready to jump, boys. There's somebody comin' around there."

The speed of the wrecker slackened. Fireman, head brakeman, student—all made for the engine steps ready to leave the train. Old Matt arose, trembling, to his feet. His face was white. He made no effort to seek safety. He plunged a trembling dirty hand into a grease smeared overall pocket and brought forth that crumpled sheet of green tissue. Smoothing the creases from it, he glanced once more down the column of station names and figures.

The engine came to a dead stop, nose pointed into the cut. Old Matt, his gray face seamed, weather beaten and streaked with grease, was white beneath the grime.

He crushed the tissue sheet in his left hand, kicked off his brakes, yanked his reverse across the quadrant, and started backing away.

The engine in motion, his left hand went into a jumper pocket, and out came the great gold watch. There came a startled cry from the fireman.

"Jump, fellers! They're into us!"

The backward moving wrecker was gaining headway. The order dropped from Old Matt's fingers to the floor of the cab. Still, he remained at his post, working sand, throttle, reverse. A blinding headlight shown in at his front window. He stooped to pick up the order, crushed it in his hands. The gap between the engines narrowed. Two men hurled themselves from the onrushing engine. Old Matt, with a last yank at the throttle, gripped the sheet of tissue, started stumbling across the cab to jump, clutching at his dangling watch as he went.

There was a thundering, splintering crash. Second No. 4 with her string of heavy Pullmans running sixty miles an hour hit the wrecker head on. The engines met on the bridge, reared, plunged sidewise down through the tops of the tall sycamores. A baggage car, the wrecker derrick, the supply cars followed.

Hours later another wrecking crew, cleaning away the débris, removed the body of Old Matt Gaffney from beneath the tons of broken, twisted steel. In his left hand was clutched the crushed and crumpled sheet of green. In his right, the great gold watch. On his face was a smile—a peaceful smile, a triumphant smile. The fatal blunder was not his.

The CANNONEERS

By ARTHUR WOODWARD

"THE CANNONEERS have hairy ears . . . "

Or something to that effect. At least that is the way our modern Red Legs are described. Ye ancient lads who served the big (and little) pieces of ordnance were generally conceived to be quite a different set. Indeed, they were most pious, and if I remember correctly, a cannoneer in the early stages of the game was required to be a godly man, religious withal, and fearing the Lord. The reason ascribed was that, since his calling was one associated with the devil and his tools were so uncertain, he was likely to be called from the earth almost any time and would in the course of time come face to face with the Creator, wherefore it behooved the cannoneer to pray often and swab his piece after each discharge.

Artillery was a novelty in the Fifteenth Century. In those days, and later, all good artillerymen were primarily infantrymen. Nowadays, so it is said, infantrymen who have the old plough step and are hopeless as doughboys are given to the artillery. Be that as it may, your original field artillerymen were chosen from the men at arms and archers. In fact, the Honorable Artillery Company of London was founded by Henry VIII in 1537 to encourage archery.

But then your cannon of those times was not the field piece of today. The pieces ranged from the small, big bored bombards to regular siege guns fifty feet long. Ammunition ranged from quantities of crossbow bolts and quarrels to huge stones weighing six hundred pounds apiece.

During the time of Mahomet II a Danish cannon maker deserted the Chris-

tian forces and leagued himself with the Moslems. He constructed a huge brass cannon fifty feet long casting a six hundred pound stone. Unfortunately this Turkish "Big Bertha" could only be fired seven times a day, principally because the metal overheated and unless the artillerymen were careful, the gun was apt to burst. Then some one conceived the idea of pouring oil into the muzzle and cooling the gun in that fashion after each explosion.

As a matter of fact, it was the uncertainty attending the explosion of the faulty ammunition of the time that made the life of a cannoneer such a hazardous one. Powder in those days was mainly serpentine, that is loose, uncorned stuff. If it was mixed and sent to the field of battle from any distance whatsoever, the chances were that the ingredients, saltpeter, sulphur and willow charcoal, would become stratified. To avoid this the component parts were taken to the field separately and mixed fresh on the spot. After each discharge a residue of glowing charcoal ash remained in the barrel and it was this smoldering material that added the element of danger to the calling of a cannoneer. Often the fresh charge ignited by the glowing particles exploded prematurely, either bursting the gun or blowing the gunner off into space at the end of his own ramrod and thence, presumably, into the presence of God.

Such items as barrages and rapid fire were unheard of; many of the early pieces were incapable of being elevated. The range was about three hundred yards and the damage was mostly confined to parapets, the roofs of houses and the morale of soldiers unaccustomed to such devilish inventions. Occasionally, as at the siege of Chiosa, a stone ball found its mark, when some unfortunate, in this case one Peter Doria, got in the way of a 195 pound missile and died thereof. It might be truly said that a man's name might be written on the ball that got him.

Speaking of jests and artillery and the efficacy of a barrage, there comes to my mind a "barrage" that was fired in the State of Kansas during the summer of 1918 at Camp Funston where the Tenth Division was getting ready to go overseas.

There were artillery units in camp and smokehouse rumors had it that the Infantry—we being of the same—were to get a little training walking behind a creeping barrage. We knew that these same artillerymen just about four weeks prior to the rumor were perfectly good ridge runners in the Ozark Mountains and most of them as yet had not learned what a live shell looked like. Therefore we were not quite so keen about this barrage business.

Came the day, as story tellers have it, when we marched out into the hills to follow the barrage. Most of us were scared stiff, but we had one consolation: some one of our relatives would collect $10,000.

We were lined up in the practise trenches. Each of us was given a tag telling him whether he was a walking case or down and out and instructed to be wounded after he had advanced to a certain point.

Somewhere in our rear were those confounded green cannoneers and plenty of shells. We waited. Suddenly the whistle blew. Time to go. We crawled out and took up a slow walk, rifles held at high "port."

Then out in front of us broke forth the most ungodly bedlam we had ever heard. We looked, we listened, and then the whole wave broke out into a roar of laughter.

Our barrage was the regimental band strung out in a skirmish line, each musician, from the bugler on down and up, playing a different tune. "Nearer My God To Thee" mingled with "Sweet Rosy O'Grady" and the discord was something marvelous.

It seems the Higher Ups got cold feet at the last moment and ordered a musical barrage instead of risking all our insurance policies in the hands of a flock of rookie artillerymen. That was the only instance where I heard a bugler who really sounded good to me.

DRY WEATHER

By HARRY G. HUSE

Dry Land Dawson tells of Prof. Alonzo Z McGuffey, rainmaker extraordinary, who claimed to be the antidote for Montana drought

THE CLOUD had been no larger than a man's hand at quitting time—a lonely puff of immaculate vapor that crept up timidly behind a jagged shoulder of Squaw Butte, and hung there, reluctant to venture out into the waste of blue which arched a fifty mile circle of shimmering benchland.

But now it gathered body from below, and thrust up slowly into the deepening sky. It boiled across the brazen face of the sun so that the threshing crew, lounging from the cook car, confronted a fiery edged apparition in whose purple heart winked fitful lightnings.

"Hey, lookit!" said Loomis, the separator man, gesturing off toward the west with a macerated toothpick. "Lookit, wouldja? Going to have a bad storm sure as I'm a foot high!"

"Yeah?" said Fife, the flunkey. He

dismissed the ominous cloud with a glance, and looked about for a cigaret.

"Lookit that old thunderhead!" persisted Loomis. "Raining pitchforks here, I bet, in the next hour!" He fidgeted nervously, sniffing the evening breeze with a prophetic air.

"Next week more likely," said Fife. "Ain't safe to say it's going to really rain in this country until you feel your shoes beginning to wet through."

"Water in that cloud, I tell you!" insisted Loomis. "Lookit! She's moving kind of this way. See how ragged-like she is there along the edges? That's wind. Coming from a little north of west too, where all our storms come from. We're in for a wet night, I betcha."

"Hmphh!" said Fife. "Takes a whole sky full of clouds a-fiddling round for three, four days to make it rain here."

"Say," put in the man from the Goosebill. "Don't know but what Loomis's right. I was reading in the almanac just yesterday evening. That almanac inside there put out by the big doctor that makes the worm medicine. Got the weather forecast for the whole year. Says 'Rocky Mountain States, August 20th to 26th, local thunderstorms in some regions'—"

"You notice the color of the sun when she come up this morning?" interrupted Loomis. "Kind of reddish hazy color? And that kind of milky look the moon had last night? You take an old hand that knows anything about the weather and he'll tell you that's always a sure sign of rain. Ain't that right, Mr. Dawson?"

He turned eagerly toward the old homesteader who had halted at the water barrel, and stood with a faintly furtive air, rinsing some clicking objects in a cup.

"Mmm!" said Dry Land Dawson.

"What'd I tell you?" said Loomis triumphantly.

"Mmm!" repeated the old homesteader.

With a swift, conjuring sort of movement, he carried one of the objects to his mouth. He repeated the operation, and faced the group with the dignity of restored dentition.

"You were speaking," he said, "about the weather?"

"Loomis here says we're going to git rain out of that cloud," said Fife.

"Well," said the old homesteader, "one man's guess is good as another's."

"All the signs is in favor of it," said Loomis. "I claim any old hand that knows anything about the weather'll say the same."

"Hmmm!" said Dry Land. "Any old hand that knows this country'll refuse to have anything at all to say on the subject of weather. His wisdom, as the feller says, will be vociferous in his silence. Like the fickleness and peculiarities of women, Montana climate's a subject on which he will be unwilling to commit himself."

He paused to cast a mildly ardent and disturbed glance back toward the cook car where the Widow Penick bent above a ravished supper table.

"Just the same," said Loomis, "I got a good notion to git my bedding in under a header barge where it'll be dry."

"Don't know but what that's good sense," said the man from the Goosebill. "You take what it said in the almanac—"

"Like the inconsistencies, unstabilities and general didoes of female human nature," continued the old homesteader, "the weather in Montana is something not to be figgered on in advance or figgered out after it's over."

He eyed a set of knuckles skinned only that noon in the gallant construction of a draining rack for the widow's dishes.

"A snowfall like as not when you're expecting a balmy rain. Chilling winds when the predictions call for a mild chinook. Cool indifference when all the indications points toward a warm smile and an extra piece of pie for supper. Irrationistical and eccentricious. Responding neither to experience, prayer nor the cunning methods of pure science."

"The weather?" asked Fife.

"What else?" said Dry Land, turning his back firmly upon the cook car to

contemplate the impenetrabilities of the looming cloud and his own ripe recollections of the capriciousness of Montana climate.

"AS EARLY AS 1910," began the old homesteader, "when the first dry-landers commenced herding in, it become evident that from then on the main topic of conversation was going to be the weather.

"In other parts where I'd lived, I've see considerable attention give the matter, and enough talk put out on the subject by just a small sized community to run two, three sessions of Congress. But I hadn't never before see it weaning the men away from their speculations about the town milliner nor the women from stewing about Old Mort Bevins' hiring a young housekeeper the same day as his wife's funeral the way it done here.

"Seemed like it got started there in the beginning when folks was all strangers coming from so many different places and walks of life that they didn't really have no common ground on which to git acquainted. A homesteading bookkeeper from Mishawaka, Indiana, meeting up with an ex-butcher from Brooklyn that was going to be his clostest neighbor, could always look up at the sky where there hadn't been a cloud for a month, and allow that it was nice, clear weather but maybe a little dry. And the butcher, even if he couldn't talk much English, could agree with him.

"That was the way it got started—just something to git acquainted about. But folks hadn't been here long before they begin to find out the weather's deserving all the attention they can give it.

"This was semi-arid country, which meant it didn't git but fifteen inches of moisture a year. It was claimed in all the homeseeker's literature that dry farming would be successful any place where there was fourteen. Folks had felt safe and prosperous with that extra inch to spare. They'd got hypnotized by all the talk about average annual precipitation into kind of thinking that rain was going to be dealt out to them regularly a inch or two at a time just when it was needed.

"Naturally it didn't work out that way. A lot of the annual precipitation come down as snow which blowed off the fields, and now and then some of it come as hail. Maybe it come when it was wanted and maybe not, like right now when we're harvesting. Maybe too the moisture'd almost entirely skip one year and make it up just at seeding time the next.

"By the end of the first year there wasn't man, woman nor child of school age on the Nine Mile Bench that wasn't an expert at talking about the weather. But naturally some was experter than others.

"The expertest of them all was a tall, gangling feller about fifty, fifty-five with a long wrinkled red neck that'd homesteaded at the edge of the foothills about three miles south of my place. Name of Folts, Ed E. Folts, and he come originally from Nebraska, same as me. Had himself a kind of quiet mousey little woman that was hard of hearing, and two, three homely kids that when you looked at them it seemed like they was mostly ears.

"Folts, he'd give a lot of time and attention to the weather before he come here. He'd kept a rain can on his place back there in Nebraska, and a barometer, and he'd got the weather for the last twenty years, with the dates of all rains and snows and first frosts and killing frosts and such-like statistics all wrote out in a neat hand in a lot of little red books. He was gifted, too, as a water witch—one of these fellers that will take a willow fork and hold it in his hands and go wandering over your place and tell you where to dig your well.

"Back in the neighborhood in Nebraska, where he'd come from, folks had kind of let Folts take charge of the weather for them. He'd got back there so that when clouds come up he could watch them for awhile and tell pretty well where they was going and what they was going to do. He'd hit the nail on the head so many times that folks depended

more on him than on the Government weather forecast. He was sure fire too on his water witching.

"Naturally he had it in the back of his mind to take charge of the weather and locating wells on Nine Mile Bench too. He'd got his place on high ground near the foothills where he could see sixty, seventy miles in three directions, and he'd set up his can and other instruments, and got himself a spy glass 'cause the distances was so much greater here, and found a place twenty miles off in the mountains where plenty of willows growed.

"But that first summer was a big disappointment to him. First off he didn't have no luck with his water witching. He couldn't even find himself a well on his own place. He'd cut and hauled a bunch of willow forks that looked like most enough for the winter firewood. He'd walked over every foot of his half section hanging on to a fork till he had the skin wore off the palms of both hands, and had had to end up by making himself a sled with a barrel on it, and hauling water from an old sheep reservoir three miles away. When he'd tackled the job of locating wells for other fellers he hadn't done much better. He'd only found two and both of them was alkali.

"HE HADN'T made no headway, neither, with the weather. 1910 was a dry year and there wasn't even a dew from the third of June to the twenty-eighth of September. Every day was just like the day before. Sky blue and not a cloud in it. Sun a-blazing away. Not a single ruckus in the way of weather 'cept the little dusty whirlwinds that'd go chasing each other across the bench in the middle of the afternoon. He'd kept a real faithful record of the time the sun come up in the morning, and the time it went down at night, but outside that there wasn't nothing to set down in his books nor nothing to prophesy. When rain finally come in the fall the clouds come from the southwest, behind the mountains which was the only direction he couldn't see, and come on him so sudden that it caught him a mile from the house, digging post holes, and wet him through.

"A lot of fellers would of been discouraged by that first season and would of give up and let the weather run itself. But not Folts! It'd got to be such a habit with him back in Nebraska to spend a lot of time out in his yard studying the clouds and the colors of the sunrises and sunsets, and keeping an eye out for rings around the moon, and sniffing the breezes to see if they smelt fresh or dusty, that he just had to keep on doing it whether there was anything to see or smell or not.

"Come cold weather he has himself sent a lot of Government bulletins on Montana weather, and he spends most the whole winter reading them and traveling round looking up all the old-timers and gitting them to tell him everything they know about Montana weather in times past.

"He don't git much out of the Government bulletins. They tell him the reason we don't git more moisture is because the clouds coming in from the Pacific git tangled up with the Rocky Mountains and drop all their rain on the other side. They say something about blizzards coming down from Medicine Hat, and chinooks from the Japan current sneaking in through the mountain passes. But that's about all.

"He gits plenty of data from the old-timers. They tell him about hailstorms where the stones is as big as turkey's eggs and kill off horses and cows like they'd been hit with grapeshot, and winters when it run along quite a spell at sixty below zero before it turned real cold and the mercury pulled so far down into the bulb that the thermometer was busted from the vacuum. He hears about blizzards where men was froze stiff running at top speed out to the woodpile for more fuel and stood there in the yard for three, four days, balanced on one foot before it warmed up enough so's the family dast go out and bring them in; and about droughts that lasted so long the cowpunchers' fingers commenced to dry

up at the ends so's that when they blowed their noses it sounded like an old diamondback rattling.

"He gits plenty of data about Montana weather, as I already said, from these old-timers. But it is conflicting and don't check up. One feller has his big blizzard the same year another has a chinook a-blowing all winter long and turning the grass green in January, and Dunc Ebbitts, the old time stage driver, sets the date of the big drought the same summer Old Man Curry claims it rained so long and there was water standing so deep everywhere that he had to put his young heifers on stilts to keep their hoofs from soaking off.

"He can't really git no accurate record from these old-timers—just a sort of general average. They ain't really helpful to him neither when it comes to describing the colors of the clouds that precedes these natural phenomenons which Folts has found back in Nebraska to be real important. One feller claims that chinook clouds is always white with purple polka dots, and another says you can always tell when there's a blizzard coming by noticing the sun dogs which'll be yellow with regular green stripes.

"Folts, as I say, spends the whole winter collecting data and setting it down. Come spring he ain't yet got nothing very reliable to work on. But he sets to work making observations of his own, and time he's been here two, three years he's made a couple of prognostications that come true.

"We got all kinds of homesteaders living there on the bench them first few years. In between me and Folts there's a fellow name of Kimes—Ira J. Kimes—that used to be a preacher down South somewheres. Not a regular preacher that's been to a theological school and's been ordained and's got the right to put D.D. after his name, but one of these kind of self-appointed, heard-a-call preachers that's got a big Adam's apple and a roaring bass voice and knows a dozen hymns and some Scripture and likes to hear himself pray.

"Kimes, he's as interested in the weather as anybody else, 'cause he's been broke when he come here and has to trust to Elijah's ravens, which is what he calls the neighbors who'll come to his shack Sundays to hear him preach and'll put something in the tin pie plate his wife'll pass. He talks just as much about the weather and prospects for rain and good crops as anybody else. Only he don't consider it as a natural act of nature but omnipotent will and blessing bestowed upon a deserving countryside or maybe withheld because of sin and transgressions. He's one of these hellfire preachers that got an idea folks act better when they're scared. He works it round in his sermons to where the weather is a kind of club him and Jehovah are holding over the whole Nine Mile Bench.

"Naturally Kimes and Folts, they don't git along very well together. Folts is a kind of a freethinker believing less in divine will than the law of averages. He claims the weather obeys natural laws and runs in cycles and over a given space of time'll repeat itself. He lets his wife go to the services at Kimes's house 'cause she's always had a religious streak and anyway, being hard of hearing, she don't git much 'cept the rumbling part of the hymns, and he don't care if she takes the kids along because they don't pay no 'tention to what the preacher's saying anyway. But he don't have nothing to do with Kimes himself. He don't even stop to visit with him when he goes by. He tried it once and they 'most had a fist fight over which was more liable to forecast rain, a falling barometer or a state of grace in the community.

"WELL, things run along three years, as I say. We have good dry farming weather, plenty of snow in December that keeps the winter wheat covered nice and melts off gentle in the spring, and showers in May, and dry spells during ripening time and harvest. Folks begin to feel prosperous. They've had fair crops on what land they had in, and they've been gitting

more and more breaking done. Come fall of the third year they got in a whopping big acreage to winter wheat.

"Things liven up on the bench that winter. Most everybody's got a little money in their pockets, and ain't homesick and worried like they was there at the beginning, and they commence to perk up and have a good time.

"Old Man Schmidt's built a big barn with a good floor in the haymow for dancing, and we organize a orchestra and a Social Club and a Card Club, and first thing we know we got a gay society season in full swing with old married folks a-laughing and a-visiting, and young folks courting, and bachelors that ain't had a chance recently to be gallant to nothing but a cookstove or a sulky plow a-airing their social graces and giving tone to the pleasant, light hearted assemblies.

"Folts, he'll come to some of these social functions. He'll take time off from studying the data he's got collected and the bulletins and books he's reading, and'll have a good time mingling with his neighbors, 'specially if they'll let him tell them what he's discovered so far about Montana weather. He's considerable of a bore sometimes, like any one idea-ed man will be. But everybody's sociable and good natured in them days, and anyway you kind of have to like him because he's so earnest-like and serious.

"Kimes, he won't have nothing to do with such goings-on. He's dead agin the dancing and the card playing and courting and he kicks up a big fuss about these sinful pursuits in the sermons he's still preaching Sundays to all that will come and listen. He makes out like everybody's going to the dogs and talks a lot about Sodom and Gomorrah. Folks have forgot all about their spiritual welfare, he says, just because times are beginning to git good, and are flirting with the pastimes of the devil. Beware, he says, of a God of Abraham that is just and merciful but sure knows how, in the pinches, to haul back and take a swing at the sinners.

"Folks'll come and listen to him real admiring, 'cause he sure has a fine voice, and they'll drop quarters and sometimes dollars in the plate. But they'll go right on enjoying themselves Saturday nights and sometimes even in the middle of the week. He works Sodom and Gomorrah for all they're worth, and he takes the plagues that come on the Egyptians and spends a whole Sunday morning on each plague. But he don't seem to make no headway discouraging people from having as good a time as they're able.

"We don't have much snow that winter. A chinook comes along in early March and melts what little there is. The water runs right off over the frozen ground. Spring comes early. There's two, three nice showers, and the wheat's up fresh and green. The sky's a deep blue with now and then a cloud like a big gob of barber shop lather a-sailing by. Everybody's out in the fields, spring plowing and putting in more wheat.

"Folts gives out that all the signs and indications points toward a fine growing season. Kimes softens down a little and hints that maybe the depraved and iniquitous is being give another chance.

"Things run along for two, three weeks. It gits time for another rain. The wheat that's already up begins to look kind of sick, and the new planting ain't coming up strong like it ought to. The ground's gitting dry and powdery, and we begin to have a lot of wind. The dust'll pick up and drift 'most like it was snow.

"One day's just like another. It'll be still and clear and bracing in the morning, when the sun comes up, and the sky deep blue. Then 'long 'bout ten o'clock the wind'll come up in little puffs, and presently it'll git to blowing steady. By afternoon the sky all round the edges'll be a dirty, slaty color from so much dust. The sun'll go down all fiery red, and the color'll hang in the air for a long time.

"It keeps on like this for a good two weeks. You can look out in the fields and see the wheat being hurt. Kimes, he's gone back to preaching hellfire and repent-sinners, and Folts is watching for clouds, and studying his books, and

taking the velocity of the wind, and finally predicting we won't have no moisture for another month, when there's a shower comes up in the middle of the night and wets everything down with a half-inch of rain. The wheat picks up and everybody's relieved 'cept Folts that's made another wrong prediction and Kimes that's had a half dozen converts in sight if heaven hadn't got soft hearted.

"BUT THEY needn't neither one of them felt bad 'cause after that shower the weather settles down to be good and dry in real earnest. Where the land ain't broke out the range grass gits browner and browner every day just like it was coming on fall, and ain't long before the wheat begins turning a kind of sick green.

"From all over the State now commences to come news of drought, and pastures drying up, and wheat fields burned out, and hard times ahead if it don't rain. Kimes announces that what he's feared is about to come to pass. Folks brought this on theirselves by their iniquities during the winter. There ain't no hope in sight unless they repent and start a-praying. There'll be prayer meetings at his house, he gives out, two times in the week and twice on Sundays. He urges all and sundry to come and git down on their knees and plead for forgiveness at the throne of grace. Quite a bunch of folks turn out for these meetings—mostly women or men that's managed by women.

"It's got too dry now for any work in the fields. There ain't nothing to do but just loaf around and speculate about the weather. Even though Folts has fell down bad on all his prophesying, quite a bunch of fellers have got into the habit of going up to his place near the foothills to visit with him. It's kind of weather headquarters, and there's some comfort watching him spying round with his telescope and seeing signs here and indications there and telling just what kind of a cloud the rain's going to come out of when it comes. 'Most any time of the day you're a mind to you can go up there and find a bunch of fellers with Folts in the middle, pleased and proud as can be, talking about the weather.

"I disremember just how the idea finally come up of bringing in a professional rainmaker. Folts didn't have nothing to do with it, that's certain, 'cause he was dead agin it from the start. As I remember some feller from Canada gits to talking 'bout one time up in Saskatchewan when they had a big drought, and hired a feller to come in and make it rain. This rainmaker, he claimed, was a real scientist and a professor with a big reputation, that went about the job in a businesslike way. First off he made all the farmers organize and put up a purse of five thousand dollars with the banker. Then he set a date and guaranteed to make it rain by then. If it rained he got the money. If it didn't he got nothing, and the money was given back to them that chipped it in. He brought in a big outfit of apparatus and set it up, and sure enough, a couple of days before the date was up, they got a good rain.

"Folts, as I say, laughs scornfully at the idea, and says there ain't nothing to it. If there was, he claims, the Government would have rainmaking stations all over the West, and there wouldn't no longer be any desert country.

"But this feller from Saskatchewan talks so enthusiastic about this rainmaker, and bears down so hard on the fact that it don't cost nothing to have him try, and you only pay if you git rain and then it's worth it, that he finally gits a bunch of the fellers to organize a committee and send off a letter to this rainmaker who's now living in California, inviting him to come up and see what he can do toward saving the year's crop. While they're waiting for him to answer they git out through the country trying to git all the dry-landers to promise to join. If a rain comes it's going to help everybody, they figure, and they don't want no deadheads collecting moisture and not paying nothing for it.

"Mostly the committee don't have no trouble gitting folks to say they'll join up and help out with the cash deposit. It's gitting so dry now the wheat's started to curl up, and everybody's staring ruin in the face. But they do run into a snag in this here preacher, this feller Kimes. He's dead set agin the idea of bringing in a rainmaker. It's interfering, he claims, with celestial plans. It's idolatry and the cunning work of the devil.

"He preaches a big sermon agin it, and you can hear him roaring a good mile away. Vanity, vanity, he claims, for man to try to control the weather when everybody knows it's ordered from above. There was rain and prayers for rain long before there was any such things as scientific methods. Man in his folly thinking he can do something by puny material methods that nothing will bring about but repentance and prayer! If heaven in its mercy don't see fit to send rain in answer to the humble petitions of the faithful, then he don't want rain.

"The committee sets some of its best arguers to work on him 'cause that big voice of his is winning quite a few people, 'specially the stingy ones, over to his way of thinking, and it's cutting down the promised contributions to the cash deposit. Ed Kelly puts up the best talk of any. He claims they ain't really aiming to interfere with divine action but just to kind of prompt it. The weather is in a kind of a deadlock now, Ed says, with the good deeds of some of the people just about balanced by the transgressions of the others, and all it needs is a little push either way. They ain't really counting on this feller they're bringing in to actually *make* rain but just to kind of start it coming, the same way you'd prime a pump.

"Ed puts up a good talk, but it don't seem to help none. Kimes orders him off his place, and goes right on with his preaching, and he'll gather the people that sides with him together for prayer meeting every night.

"WELL, the committee gits a reply from the rainmaker in California whose name is McGuffey—Professor Alonzo Z. McGuffey—and who writes on very toney stationery with a steel engraving of himself at the top. He has read, he says, of the plight of the good people of Montana, and he is more than eager to come and help them out. He encloses a contract which he asks them to have responsible parties sign, and he gives them detailed instructions about collecting the money from one and all and having it deposited in the bank. He's ready to come the minute they wire him they got five thousand dollars.

"There's been so much excitement about the rainmaker coming in and Kimes bucking the idea, and now about collecting the last of the money and sending for McGuffey to come, that nobody ain't paid no attention to Folts. It ain't until the professor's gitting down off the train in town where 'most everybody's gone to git a look at him and his equipment, that I realize how bad it's hurt Folts's pride for the community to have brought in an outsider to handle the weather.

"There's a big crowd, as I say, waiting down to the railroad station. Off to one side, all by himself, stands Folts, looking all upset and lonesome, like a feller that's trying to make fun of the whole fool idea but can't quite do it, and wishes he hadn't come but his curiosity just naturally brought him. I can't help feeling sorry for him.

"Well, folks feel better the minute Professor McGuffey steps down on the platform. He looks so prosperous and confident. He's got on striped pants and a long tailed coat and one of these puffy neckties that hides the whole boozom so's you can't tell whether he's got on a shirt or not. He's got a Japanese feller with him dressed up in a green uniform as a kind of general flunkey. His outfit's packed in big cases in the baggage car with his name and picture plastered big all over them. Folks feel even better when they see all them cases. Only Folts

hangs off, looking scornful at the whole proceedings.

"Professor McGuffey don't waste no time. He goes first to the bank to be sure the money's there, and then he has his outfit loaded on wagons and comes out on the bench looking for the best place to set it up. He picks a little rise called Sheep Shed Hill that looks across one way to Kimes's and the other way to Folts's and, with twice as many dry-landers as he needs helping him, sets up a twenty foot steel tower with what looks like the granddaddy of all iron pots up on top with its big, black mouth pointing up at the sky. Up on the platform around the pot they hoist three, four big metal drums of bad smelling chemicals. Then the Jap sets up a fancy little striped tent near the foot of the tower, and unpacks a first class camping outfit, and the professor chases everybody away and tells them to stay away.

"Before we're through the gate a half mile away we can see the prof and the Jap up on the platform mixing up something that smokes in the pot and presently there's a strong smell comes floating downwind making everybody cough and some of the weaker stomached retch.

"Folts, he's gone along with the crowd when they come out from town, but he's stayed out on the road, and not had nothing to do with setting up the outfit. He's too proud now to ask questions, but he don't need to 'cause everybody's talking 'bout what they've seen and speculating 'bout what was in them drums and how it works.

"I guess Folts'd had his mind made up to say nothing about the professor and his methods. He hadn't made no contribution to the deposit, and anyway he wasn't the kind of a fellow to stir up a fuss and criticize. But everybody was so enthusiastic about the professor's businesslike ways and so confident he was going to make it rain, Folts just couldn't hold in.

"He spoke out now and said there wasn't nothing to the professor but hocus-pocus. He was just gambling on the law of averages. They'd set a date for him two weeks off. If it rained before then he made five thousand dollars. If it didn't he wasn't out nothing but his time and railroad fare which was maybe three, four hundred dollars. It was a good enough gamble for anybody to take. There wasn't, he claimed, but one method that'd ever been knowed to produce rain, and there had to be clouds to use that and sometimes it worked and sometimes not.

"Well, remarks like that at a time when every one had been feeling optimistic and happy, didn't make Folts popular. The feller from Saskatchewan took it harder than any of the rest. He'd been the head of the committee and he'd had several drinks to celebrate the professor's coming and now he bristled up and jumped right down Folts's throat. What'd he know about it anyway, he asked him. What made him think he knew so much about the weather? Hadn't nobody round here ever caught him making a right prediction. If he knowed so much about it, why didn't he go to work himself and make it rain? Folts, he just kind of turned white and stammered. You couldn't help feeling sorry for him. There wasn't nothing for him to say. He gulped a couple of times and then he got his head up and stared right into the eyes of the feller from Saskatchewan. Maybe he would, he said, after that fool professor had fell down.

"Nobody thought then Folts really had anything in his mind. I wouldn't of knowed it either until everything was all over if he hadn't busted down that night 'bout ten days later when he was going by my place. The Professor's time was almost up then and it was gitting dryer'n ever. Kimes and his congregation had prayed themselves hoarse and there still wasn't a sign of a cloud in the sky.

"I WAS gitting ready for bed that evening when I hear the rattle of trace chains and the clomping of hoofs and what sounds like the chockle of a loaded wagon coming down the road. One wheel was

squealing like it was running dry and there was a *thump-thump* every time it went around like it was flattening out on one side. I'm just wondering who can be hauling a load out from town this time of night when I hear a crash and a feller hollering—'Whoa!'

"I'm out in the road in no time with a lantern, and what I see sure makes me rub my eyes. There's Folts with a four horse team hitched on to the most curious outfit I've ever see on these roads. The front part's the tongue and wheels of a lumber wagon and the hind end's the big old Civil War cannon they've had in the park by the old fort down to the county seat.¶ One wheel's give down on the cannon and the axle's rooting in the dirt with the mouth of that old time Big Bertha pointing up into the sky.

"Seems like Folts feels pretty bad about busting down that way and having me find out what he's up to. He's meant to keep it a surprise. He's come across in his reading an account of the experiments some Army general made for the Department of Agriculture down in Texas, and how the general claimed he made it rain by shooting big guns up into the clouds. Folts, he's made up his mind to try it. He ain't felt like asking for the use of the cannon for fear folks would make fun of him. He's just gone down after dark and got it, and is hauling it home. He aims to wait until the professor's two weeks is up and he's fell down on the job, and then he's going to load that old cannon with giant powder and boulders and cut her loose.

"It takes us a good couple of hours to git that axle jacked up and a wheel on it off my wagon so's he can git home. He makes me promise to say nothing about it, and offers to pay me for my time and the use of the wheel."

A LOW rumble of distant thunder interrupted the old homesteader. He paused to eye the cloud which had mounted almost to the zenith. Loomis fidgetted uneasily on the wheat bundle where he lounged and turned to cast an apprehensive glance toward his bedding roll.

"Plenty of time when it begins to sprinkle, if any," reassured Fife, and returned his attention to Dry Land Dawson.

The old homesteader cleared his throat.

"We come now to the final day of Professor McGuffey's contract, and to our general topic of conversation—the vagariousness of the Montana climate.

"The morning of that last day dawned bright and fair. The sun come up a round red ball in a sky so bare and blue it made you lonesome to look at it. By ten o'clock it was blazing down on the withering wheatfields so fierce it seemed like it'd set them afire, and the air was all wiggly with dancing heat waves.

"Nine Mile Bench, gasping for breath and wiping the dust out of its eyes, was dividing itself into two camps for the final effort . . .

"Over on the road in front of Sheep Shed Hill folks was strung out all along the barb wire fence watching the last desperate labors of the prof and his Jap flunkey. They was sure working. The prof's shed his city clothes and's got on a pair of overalls and him and the Jap are up there on the platform stirring up one mixture after another. There's greenish smoke curling up out of the pot and the stinks that come drifting downwind are awful.

"Three miles southwest Kimes is gitting under way with his biggest and loudest prayer meeting. He's been gitting new followers every day since the prof's efforts have failed to make it rain, and now there's more than the shack'll hold so that lots of folks are down on the ground outside the windows, a-broiling in the sun.

"Everybody's one place or the other 'cept Folts. He's off up there all alone on his place near the foothills, with nobody paying no attention to him. I look up there now and then when I'm shuttling back and forth between Kimes's and Sheep Shed Hill, and I can see where he's got the cannon spotted on a little rise of

ground, and covered up with an old tarpaulin, and is kind of monkeying round it.

"It goes along that way until three o'clock in the afternoon, with the air gitting hotter and hotter and stiller and stiller until it's plumb breathless and you feel all tight and nervous-like inside. I've gone back to my shack to git a drink and see if I can't cool off a little setting in the shade, but seems like I'm fidgetty all over and can't keep still.

"I'm fretting and fussing around in my yard, and all the time I'm feeling inside me that somethin's going to happen. I try to argue myself out of such a silly notion but I keep thinking that what with all the prof's strong smells and Kimes's loud prayers going up into the blue sky there's a lot of conflicting pressure being brought to bear on the weather and you can't tell how the mixture's liable to affect it.

"I guess I must of been the first one to see the cloud a-coming, because it's a good five minutes after I've noticed it sticking its black nose around the corner of the mountains before I hear the whoops and hallelujahs over to Kimes's place and look over and see the prof standing still on his tower with his hand up in the air like a man who's done his work well, and is now bidding the people to observe the results of his efforts. I look up to Folts's place but it seems like the cloud's still hid from him by the mountains, 'cause he's still just pottering around and ain't yet got the tarpaulin off the gun.

"Well, sir, that cloud comes up faster and turns more colors in a short space of time than any cloud I've ever see. It just seems to boil right up around the corner of the mountains, and first it's black and then purple and then greenish like an old bruise, and then it gits white in the center and commences to roll.

"I'm plumb scared by this time, and so, I guess, is everybody else. The air is still quiet and breathless, and I can hear the people over at Sheep Shed Hill and at Kimes's yelling to one another and gathering up their kids and tumbling into their wagons and a-larruping their horses for home. Then there commences a roar like a faraway freight train, and I see the clouds start to whirl and the funnel forming.

"I'm clear to the door of my potato cellar before I dast stop and take another look. What I see 'most paralyzes me. The funnel's let down a long twisting tail like an elephant's trunk, and it's dipping and swaying this way and that, and whenever it touches the ground it just sucks up everything in sight. It's going cattycorner down across the bench heading right for Folts' place, and if it keeps on the way it's going it'll come right down the road where most of the folks are running their horses to git home. I see it pick up Ed Kelly's cow-stable like it was a pile of matches and his spotted cow with it, and I'm just holding my breath for Folts whose place is next. He's had plenty of time, I figger, to git to cover, but danged if he ain't still there, right out in the open beside his cannon, right square in front of that twisting, roaring cloud!

"There he stands with a smoking torch in his hand, braver than any soldier, waiting for that tornado to come within gunshot. He's jiggering the barrel and taking careful aim. All of a sudden he claps the fire to the gun and there comes a flash of flame and a boom that makes the noise of the storm sound like nothing. I've stood all my nerves'll stand by now, and I duck down into the root cellar and close the door."

THE OLD homesteader paused to cast a speculative eye up into the heavens where the stars were disappearing. A few large drops of rain plopped in the dust of the stubble, and resounded on the galvanized roof of the cook car.

The raindrops ceased.

"Right square into the middle of that twister," he resumed, "he let her have it. He said afterward he'd read about their busting waterspouts that way in the navy. Half a keg of powder and a bushel

of niggerheads! It split that roaring funnel into two pieces and just turned them into ordinary storms. One half come down a narrow strip of country and passed right over Kimes's house. The other half, it swung a little to the north and blowed away Prof McGuffey's tent and flattened out his tower!"

"You got rain with it?" inquired the man from the Goosebill.

"None then," said Dry Land. "The real rain come three days later, after Prof McGuffey's gone back to California. The half of the cloud that went over Kimes's place that day let down a couple of inches of hail. Over to Sheep Shed Hill there was snow flurries."

The old homesteader again eyed the heavens. The clouds were breaking, and low in the east a hazy moon swam into an open space.

"Hmphh!" said Loomis. "We ain't going to git a shower after all!"

"That's what I was telling you in the first place," said Fife. "It ain't safe to say it's going to rain in this country until you feel your shoes beginning to wet through!"

"Just the same," said the man from the Goosebill, "I'm bringing my bed in here under the header barge. 'Rocky Mountain States!' I read it with my own eyes right in the worm medicine almanac. 'Local thunderstorms in some regions!' "

The old homesteader eyed the cook car where the Widow Penick sat quietly in a kitchen chair near the open door, her hands folded in her lap, gazing out into the moonlit night. He arose, yawned, stretched, and moved casually toward the water barrel. The tin cup clanged loudly on its metal lip.

The widow arose and stood in the open doorway, looking up at the heavens.

"Seemed like there for awhile," she said, dispassionately, "we was going to have a thunder shower."

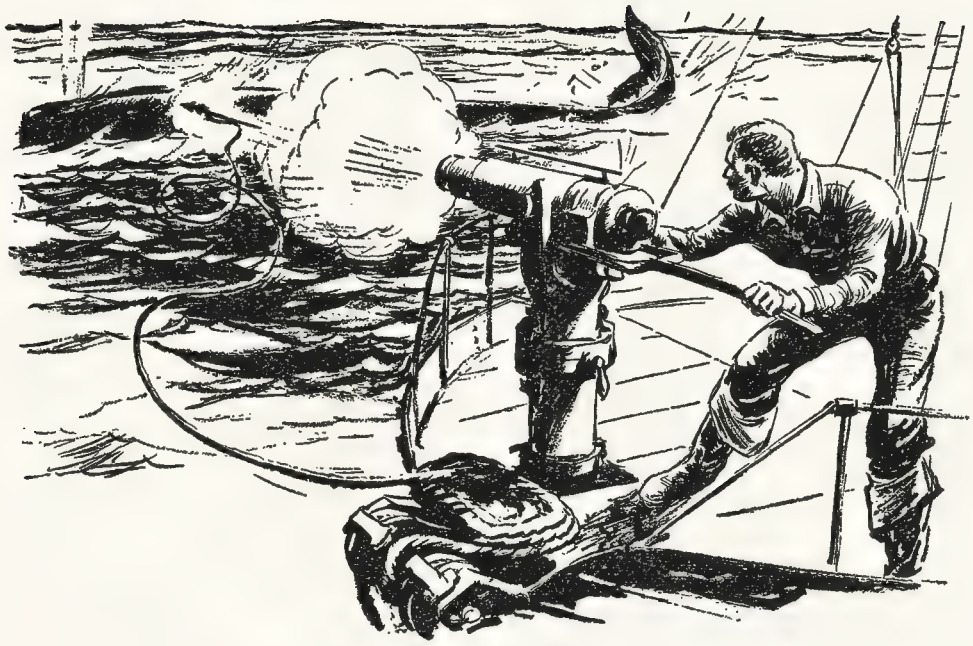
"Yes, ma'am," said Dry Land Dawson.

"It don't look now like we was going to git rain after all," she continued.

"No, ma'am," said Dry Land, "it sure don't."

"You can't never tell about the weather in this dry climate." She shifted her regard to the old homesteader. "Maybe you'd like a little snack before you turn in?"

"That's right," said Dry Land, "about the weather. You can't tell. Irrationistical and eccentricious! I guess I could manage with a piece of cold pie."



NEGLEY FARSON

returns to our pages with a colorful tale of whaling days

KILLING A WHALE

WE WERE about seventy-five miles northwest of the Shetlands, cruising around in that empty patch of Atlantic between the Faroe Islands and Norway, looking for a whale. Jorgensen, the gunner of the *Skeena*, lay scowling in a bridge wing; the mate chewed his pipe at the wheel; and the man in the lookout barrel seemed to have gone fast asleep.

"Dere iss no hvales!" grunted Jorgensen.

"But there must be."

"No. Dey came by here in de spring, making deir eastward passage. But now —now I don't know. No von knows about der hvale. I tink dey're going down between de Faroes and Iceland."

Saying which, Jorgensen—who had killed twenty-six hundred whales in his life —went below for his sleep. He was right: "No von knows about der hvale." There are no spinneys, or copses, or thickets on the ocean in which game may lurk. Deep water all looks much the same. Below us, we knew, were the black depths of the one hundred fathom bank, along which the whales were supposed to be making their yearly pilgrimage. This was their thoroughfare; but the Gulf Stream had shifted farther west; we could not locate the pink drifts of shrimp; and the seas

were desolate and inscrutable. Not even a bird. Nothing but the waves jumping up against a straight skyline.

The whales, said the mate, had been frightened. They were keeping off the shore, shifting around the world, in the search for some sanctuary. I hoped they would find it. But so long as whales are being hunted and killed, I did not want to be left out. I wanted the experience. I had been cruising about in the little one hundred and five foot whaling steamer; I had had eggs and bacon for breakfast, and delicious macaroni-and-raisin puddings for my dinners; I had slept in the comfortable mahogany chart house with Jorgensen, the gunner; I had played whist with the ten Norwegians in the ship; sat and yarned about whales in the sounds off Chile—whales making love in the warm tropic seas; listened to their tales of the Antarctic, the everlasting winds of South Georgia, the Rose Sea, Japan; I had seen the dawn come like metal; the sea in all its moods, from the black shingles driving past us before the following storm to days of flat calms, when it lay like a bowl of silver, with the great black fins of the basking sharks sticking out of it. I had had delights a-plenty—but no whale.

"*Blaast!*"

The lookout man was leaning out of his barrel, swinging in the sky, his rigid arm thrust to windward.

"*Blaast!*"

I looked, and above the smother of brownish seas in the far distance, I thought I detected a faint vapor—like a puff of smoke. When it vanished I knew that I had seen a "blow." That was all there was to it—just a faint puff shooting suddenly out of the turmoil of those waves—and then the seas were empty again. We went after it.

It seemed ridiculous, the whale catcher, iron and steel, tremendously solid and tangible, chasing after such an evanescent will-o'-the-wisp. That vapor was a banshee! It mocked us, dancing over the waves. *Pouf!*—gone in the air. With the black smoke curling out of her red funnel the *Skeena* pounded after it. We chased it as madly as a cat chases its tail. An idiotic performance. It was a cold gray day, a day to be practical, and here we were chasing madly across the seas, burning up good coal, for what? Then, about half a mile off to starboard, clearly shown against the leaden sky, there were three blows—*puff—puff—puff*—as if some giant hand, traveling beneath the surface, had suddenly squeezed a monstrous atomizer. *Puff—puff—puff!*

"By golly!" cried the mate. "Fin-whales! Two of 'em!"

I laughed, and told Andersen that he was "laying it on." How could he tell, from three puffs, what had made them?

"Because," he said, "the sei-whale blows only once—*pstsss*—an' den he goes down. De fin-whale blows two or three times together—*poof, poof, poof.*" Andersen struck a horny finger at the waves. "There was two blows over dere at de same time."

So there you are. We were chasing two fin-whales, prizes of the sea. They meant about two hundred English pounds each to the owners of the *Skeena.* To me they meant everything. Nothing mattered; I did not give a damn what might happen to me afterward, whether I made a million or starved to death in London or New York—I could feel satisfied. I had helped to kill a whale! I had had one of the great emotional delights of life, and nothing could take it away from me. I could relive it, every detail, in the misery of my garret. That was the way those blows affected me—and so I give it to you—that I would have complete emotional fulfilment upon the death of that whale.

What greater thrill could life offer? The only trouble was that the fin-whale did not want to be killed.

WE HAD taken up the chase from a distance of two miles. Had the whales known we were after them, had they known what we meant, they could have streaked off and left us, because the best we could do was twelve knots. But they seemed to

be gamboling, playing tag on their pilgrimage to the warm southern seas. We were gradually catching up with them, running them down. It could not be called a pursuit—although our field seemed to close—because there was no direction about it. The whales might be anywhere. They blew off our bows and they blew off our stern, and there were anxious, agonizing periods when we could not see them at all. Then *blaast!*—and the *Skeena* would wheel like a polo pony and start chasing again.

We did this for two hours.

Jorgensen had gone down to his gun, a muzzle loading cannon, swivel mounted on the nose of the *Skeena*, loaded with a five foot steel harpoon and a pound of black powder. This harpoon had a shrapnel grenade in its arrow headed tip, loaded with two and one-half pounds of smokeless powder. Three hundred fathoms of six-inch manila whale-line were fastened to a slot in its shaft. When the *Skeena* could get within forty yards of the whale, the whale was going to get this harpoon.

That was our intention.

Jorgensen, one of the most famous killers in that Norwegian oligarchy of the gunners, hung on to his gun. The *Skeena* was plunging along, like a galloping horse, across the rough seas. The mate held the wheel. The first engineer was below in his engine room, his hands on his throttles, his one eye on the telegraph. The second engineer stood at the throttle of the fifteen-ton steam windlass on the steel deck below. The steward, in his red and blue checkered shirt, had left his beloved macaroni-and-raisin-pudding to stew in the galley and stood by the windlass brake, ready to snub it against the frantic lunges of the whale. The crew stood, poised and tense, among the iron bitts, lines, cables and stabbing spears. We were a statue-ship, frozen, motionless in expectancy—all except the two stokers down below, digging, heaving, slamming the fire doors, hurling black coal into the roaring belly of the *Skeena* as she chased the great whale.

We slid. Jorgensen had signaled with his huge paw to let the ship ride.

"Pstsss!"

There was a sharp sigh, like a huge puncture, or a valve in our engine room, and a vast shape came out of the water at our side. An unbelievable shape. A tremendous, black, wet, glistening thing like a great rubber tire. It curved—a monstrous apparition—mounting upward to our bridge. Ah! I felt my nerves would snap if that thing came out any farther. It was curving fast; the black tire spun round, a fin coursed past—a startling thing on that smooth shining surface. *Whussh*—and it was gone.

That was a fin-whale, forty yards off.

The whale had come up too far aft for Jorgensen to get a shot at it. It came up again about two hundred yards off our port. We jumped after it. It broke dead ahead, a hundred yards off. Again—to the left—and then Jorgensen raised his hand.

I saw the whale coming to the surface. A great purple shape beneath the sea. He was crossing our bows. He came out, shot his blow, kept on curving out, mounting, mounting—the green seas sluicing down his flanks, crashing in white lace along his great length.

"A big von!" gasped the mate.

Curving, the strange fin shot round—and then Jorgensen fired.

There was a roar, a world of white smoke, the line leaping after the harpoon like a snake. Black blobs of line. A dull thud as the bomb exploded inside him, and the whale vanished.

THE SEAS were just as empty as if there had never been any whale. The *Skeena* rocked idly, her engines slowly reversed. A faint patch of sun turned the seas a bright green. Jorgensen leaned, peering down over the bow, a curious, puzzled posture—as if wondering why he had missed—and then I saw the whale-line.

It was sizzling through the masthead brakes like a hydraulic jet. The whale

was taking it out—ripping it out of the ship. I saw it whizzing around the windlass, saw the second engineer and the steward, standing tensely at throttle and brake. I saw Pedersen, one of the A. B's, coming up through the deck with another steel harpoon. And then, about three hundred yards off to port, I saw the whale thrash the seas.

He was churning them to white foam. A huge fellow, about seventy feet long, gray as a battleship. I saw a great river of scarlet staining the white seas by his tail. I saw the torn red wound where our whale line entered his back; and then he shot off again. He did not, I believe, actually tow the ship. It was a difficult thing to determine. The wind did not whizz past our ears. There was none of that. This was a sullen struggle—an inhuman tug-of-war. The whale, with every monstrous tendon, with every ton of red muscle in that great agonized body, was fighting furiously to free himself from that five foot steel harpoon. Its steel barbs had expanded inside his body, four of them, a foot long, digging, spreading, cutting with their angles to bite down on more flesh. The ship, her triple expansion six hundred horse power engines reversed, was pulling against him, her propeller turning over quite complacently, *thrum—thrum—thrum* . . .

We could walk about. I paced back and forth the small rectangle of bridge, dodging the binnacle, the telegraph, the mate at the wheel, smoking cigarets half through and then throwing them away.

"Will we get him?"

"I don't know," said Andersen. "Dot shot was too far back, got him just aft de fin—missed his lungs. He ain't hurt much. By golly—dere he is!"

The whale had come up after a deep sound, thrashing about like a mad thing, about a fifth of a mile ahead. I saw our whale line flung up against the gray sky.

"Dis powder's no good!" grunted Andersen.

Jorgensen bellowed something, and Andersen asked me to take the wheel.

"Going to give him another harpoon," he said.

It sounded like a fantastic surgical operation of some sort. We were going to haul that monstrous thing back to the ship and deliberately destroy it with another harpoon. It sounded horrible—obscene.

They were reloading the gun. Andersen shoved in a half-pound bag of black powder, stuffed in a rubber wad—to soften the impact of the explosion against the slotted harpoon—and then he and Jorgensen rammed the charge home with terrific thumps of the steel harpoon itself. An altogether reckless performance, which made my hair stand on end; I had a shocking picture of Andersen and the ox-like Jorgensen shooting out into space, clutching on to the barbs of that whistling harpoon. But they escaped that, and Pedersen quickly spliced on the forerunner of another three hundred fathom six-inch whale-line. They then commenced to haul back the whale.

Whether we would have pulled the whale back to the ship, or the ship up to the whale, is immaterial, because the thing did not happen. At the first tug of the whale line, being drawn back into the the ship by that fifteen ton steam windlass, the whale dived. He went down. Disappeared. And he kept right on going down, boring desperately toward the floor of the sea. He went down, taking more line, until Andersen declared that he must be a quarter-mile straight down underneath.

"Ha!" snorted Andersen, when I said the pressure would crush him. "Crush a hvale—dot's good!"

Wherever he was, in what submarine depth, he was too much for the ship. We snubbed him, braking down on the whale line. The *Skeena* did a curtsey, her head went down; and we poised there for a moment, with our tail out of water. Then there was an alarming clatter as the windlass flew round, and the *Skeena* rocked idly on the waves.

Our harpoon had pulled out.

"WELL, damn it to hell!" remarked Andersen, as the harpoon came aboard with an ugly cluster of great white tendons in its barbs. "He's gone."

We had all been hoping, I suppose, that the whale had been rushing upward toward the ship, the way one had charged Jorgensen in the Antarctic; shooting clear out of water, to fall back, smashing the bridge and the side of the ship. The steersman, said Jorgensen, had fainted.

We had been forced to lie idle while we hauled back our line. But now, with a fresh harpoon in our gun, we took up the chase. The wounded whale had appeared on the surface about half a mile off. He was lying awash, with the waves bursting over his back, and the sea gulls screaming over him. These sea gulls, attracted by his blood, lusting for a glut, were now to help us hunt him down. Flying over the waves, they could see him coursing beneath the surface. They began to scream, like the harpies they were, at the color of his blood.

But night was falling, a bad storm was making up and, worst of all, we had only a half-shot in the gun.

The whale waited until we were almost on top of him before he went under. He had been lying motionless, like an old derelict hulk, but he went off like a shot. He came up another half mile away—on our stern. We turned and went after him. He dived, came up on the other side of our ship. I saw him turn, swing his great body and pass under our keel. The sea gulls floated over us, crying, screaming with rage. He came up heavily, moving slowly, making a red wallow in the waves, and went down again.

I don't know which I hated most: the harpy gulls, or Andersen. Andersen had just told me that the whale could probably keep up this kind of business until sunset.

Jorgensen was so disgusted that he had abandoned the gun. A whale more or less meant nothing to him—not to a man who has killed twenty-six hundred of them. Jorgensen wanted his coffee. He lumbered past me on the steel deck and entered the mess. I hated him, too.

"What's the matter?" I demanded. "Don't you want to get this whale?"

"Sure," grinned Andersen, who had once been a harbor hand in New York. "Only, how're we going to do it?"

Yes, that was the maddening part of it—the whale would not come up off our bows. He seemed to know what we meant—that it was death to get in front of us. And although the *Skeena*—being the last word in whale catchers—had no keel from amidships aft, there were limits to her agility. She could not switch about to catch a whale passing directly under the ship. Once he came up so close that I could have jumped on to his back from our bridge. But that would not do me any good.

I saw Jorgensen, a cup of coffee in one paw, a hunk of the steward's cake in the other, his jaws munching, standing directly below me on the steel deck. His ridiculous little black captain's cap was perched on the silver thatch of his head. He was a round, fat man—like a saturnine Billiken. I hated him! And then, as I watched, I saw Jorgensen drop the cake, drop the cup, and make a dash for his gun. The whale was coming up just ahead of us, crossing to the left. Andersen swung the ship, Jorgensen leaned over his sights, and the whale emerged from the waves.

"*Pstsss!*" he sighed, wearily.

That large, fat, glistening back came slowly out into the cold wet wind and Jorgensen shot the harpoon smack into the middle of it.

It was the death shot. There was no missing the significance of that shot. The whale had vanished with its shock. Exploding, almost, in a smother of white seas. But in a few seconds it came up ahead and shot a stream of solid blood into the dark air.

"Blood!" chortled Andersen. "Blood—dot's got his lungs."

It was oppressive to watch the dying struggles of leviathan. The engineer had

touched a throttle and pulled a lever somewhere in the engine room, and our engines were reversed. The machinery was going round; tachometers were counting the revolutions, the throws of the crank shaft; other little gadgets were ticking over notched wheels, feeding oil, drops of grease into smooth working bearings. No torture there. The mate was filling his pipe. But leviathan was dying. With great gasping sobs, filled with blood, he was fighting to the last. Another charge—he straightened the heavy line—and the accumulator block jigged up and down the mast, absorbing the shock. Our rigging was black, the sun a dull red. And then a strange head emerged from the waves, a weird shoe-like nose. The whale turned on his side, bent in his agony, and a white tail appeared by the ship. They stayed there, that strange head and that unexpectedly delicate tail—beautiful as a butterfly's wing—and then the whale sank.

He was dead.

We hauled him back, cut off his tail, pumped him full of air, and bound him to the *Skeena* with iron chains.

"Home," grinned the mate.

The ship turned, steered for the land. It was now night. I slid down the ladder and went solemnly to the rail. The great seas were sluicing past, bright green from the galley light. I grasped a stay and leaned down. A wave coursed along and the whale rose on top of it. He was almost as long as the ship. I put my hand on him . . .

"She's a lady," said Andersen. "I'll bet dere's another leetle whale inside of her. Dot's why she fought so much."

Somehow, I did not feel satisfied.

THE SECOND

of a series of gripping tales of the military spies

By ARED WHITE

CHAPTER I

THE SPY

"WHEN the Crown Prince's goose - steppers hit up against H Company they're going to wreck their Paris timetable," said Captain Wallace Knighton in a pleasant voice to his four lieutenants. There was a certain erudite precision and a nicety of enunciation in the captain's voice that contrasted oddly with his rough words.

The young captain's large gray eyes sparkled with pride. He stood with his company officers on a grassy knoll in front of his command post, watching the men of a rear platoon going through their bayonet paces under the sweltering July sun. It was not an ordered drill. H Company was through with formal drills for the time being and occupied a defensive position on the bank of the Marne, waiting for the Boche to come over and fight. Their position was organized and ready. Therefore hot work with the bayonet in midday was a spontaneous expression of high battle morale, an evidence of the lusty eagerness in the ranks for the grim adventure of battle. Their bristling energy stood out all the more conspicuously in comparison with the war weary *poilus* on the left flank who sat dull eyed and staring while they awaited another shambles.

"Urgh-h-r-r-r-r!"

Raucous, deep throated snarls rose from the bayoneted ranks as men thrust home their flashing blades in savage pantomime. Boyish faces, wind burned and lean from hard weeks of intensive training, twisted into teeth baring grimaces as they launched their blades. And there was something more than a carefully cultivated war hate in their ferocious growls as they stabbed the air. There was a certain quality of grim determination, an unconquerable resolve to hold the river slopes at all costs against serried, fog green waves of frenzied humans who would howl upon them out of a tempest of flame. Tomorrow the German tempest might break, or next week, or the week thereafter. Or it might appear before the sun set today.

There was pride of achievement in Captain Knighton's smile as he stood there observing the mettle of his men. Their fighting spirit brought to him the thrill of personal victory, the reward of ten months of sweltering work, sixteen hours each day, into which he had thrown every ounce of his being. He had made H Company. In those ten months he had recast peace loving young civilians into confident fighting men. And the greatest miracle of it all was that in the same period he had recast himself, made himself over from a peaceful architect, with never a thought of the red realities that are war, into a reliant leader of men in the field.

His smile deepened as he reflected upon the transformation. In one sense he had put over a stupendous hoax upon these

ACROSS *the* LINES

men and boys. The things of war he had taught them with such exactitude, day by day, he had learned just ahead of them by night while they slept. The qualities of discipline and courage which he had instilled in them day after day were qualities in which he had schooled himself as he served. An unprepared nation shunted into sudden war had given him a captain's commission with which to make himself, or break himself, according to his adaptability. And now for the first time he knew for certain that he had succeeded in the miracle.

"I believe we've built an outfit that will stand up against the best men the Boche

have got to send over," Captain Knighton addressed his officers.

His pride was reflected in the faces of his lieutenants.

"I'm saying you've put up the best outfit in the regiment," said First Lieutenant Dawson, second in command of H Company. "I've seen them all at work and play, but H shades the best of them."

"I'm for claiming more territory," exclaimed a junior lieutenant. "H has got anything beat in the whole division. And if our captain doesn't come out with oak leaves, it'll be because the colonel is blind and there's no justice in the Army."

The captain blushed furiously.

"I appreciate your kind thoughts, gentlemen," he spoke up, "but promotion is the last thing I'm thinking of. It will be a much greater satisfaction to me just to go through with H Company and see our improvised fighting machine take some of the starch out of those conceited Prussians. You remember that I've always preached on that subject."

"I hope the captain is right and most of those high rankers are wrong," said Lieutenant Dawson. "I heard the colonel say it was murder when we were shoved up here without a chance to finish our battle training."

"Well, I didn't live in Germany for nearly five years without learning a few things they didn't teach me at Heidelberg," said Captain Knighton. "Regardless of what anybody says, I'm telling you those German war mannikins are no match for our men—no matter what the differences in training! You'll see when they come over. They'll fight, mind you—and it will be a red mess. But our lads will put it over on them, and I'm going to get a lot more satisfaction than you know anything about in helping to prove the truth of what I say."

A second lieutenant broke in anxiously.

"Isn't that the colonel coming over this way?" he asked, indicating a solitary uniformed figure in the distant foreground.

The four officers quickly identified as their regimental commander a square, bristling little man who was marching swiftly over the uneven ground toward them.

"I can't figure what can have gone haywire to bring him down here," scowled Lieutenant Dawson. "All alone, too, and in a hurry. It isn't an hour since he had us checked over from A to izzard by his R. Ex. What's up now?"

"Didn't his Ex-officer compliment H Company?" demanded the junior second lieutenant. "It's my bet he just naturally wants to tell us personally how good we are."

Captain Knighton made a hurried mental survey of the sector. Everything checked out perfectly. Not a detail had been overlooked. A deep network of barbed wire had been thrown along the banks of the Marne. From that point back, the terrain had been skilfully organized in depth so that German assault waves, taking one position, would find themselves facing another stronghold of entrenched riflemen. Equipment and ammunition were complete; the men knew what was expected of them—that they were to hold to the last man. What was more, their fighting mettle was such that nothing short of extermination could conquer H Company.

They saw that the colonel's face was hard and inscrutable as he approached. He wasted no time in formality or preliminary as he stamped to a halt directly in front of the company commander.

"Captain Knighton," he announced, "I relieve you of your command—effective here and now!"

The captain stood blinking dumbly for several moments, stunned by the unexpected swiftness of the blow, unable to fit the colonel's words into any rational place in his mind. It was all too incredible, too impossible, a something his mind could not grasp all at once.

"What—what was that—sir?" he stammered.

"You heard clearly enough what I said!" snapped the colonel. "Turn your company over to Lieutenant Dawson, get your effects together and report back at my P. C. without delay on your way out

of here. You're through in this regiment."

Captain Knighton quickly regained possession of his faculties. Inherent qualities of character that had pulled him through the searching tests of the training period rose within him to meet this racking crisis. He faced the colonel with a show of poise and dignity.

"May I inquire the reason for your action, sir?" he asked coolly.

The colonel's eyes dropped to the ground for an instant and he shifted uneasily. But his voice was firm and cutting when he replied.

"Yes, I'll tell you," he said. "You simply don't fit into the picture in my regiment. I've been observing you for some time and it is my duty to let you go. I'm sorry, Knighton, that it is necessary to break you. Now lose no time turning over to Dawson. I'll expect you to be on your way out of the regimental area within an hour."

"Very good, sir," said Knighton, saluting his acceptance of the hard order.

Four taut faces turned to Captain Knighton as the colonel strode off. Dawson's eyes burned with the fire of righteous indignation. The junior lieutenant's eyes filled with tears. The other two lieutenants stood as if they had not recovered from the dire verbal bombshell that the colonel had thrown in their faces.

"It's a damnable outrage!" stormed the loyal Dawson. "If the captain isn't fit to command H Company, then I'm not fit to command a squad."

"And the rest of us aren't good enough for kitchen police," put in a second lieutenant. "There's some dirty work behind all this. It'll raise hell in H Company when the men find it out."

"Gentlemen!" There was reproach in Captain Knighton's voice. "Have I not taught you loyalty to orders—that loyalty to higher authority is the first duty of an officer in war?"

"But must we accept rank injustice of this kind like so many bleating sheep?" retorted Dawson hotly.

Knighton spurned the comfort of their hot sympathy, comfort that a lesser man would have embraced eagerly in such an extremity. It had come to him quickly, out of his sense of responsibility as a company commander whose men faced imminent battle, that he must efface himself manfully, without doing damage to morale, without injury to the fighting spirit he had developed in his men.

"It is not always given to us," he addressed his lieutenants quietly, "to see ourselves as others see us. Perhaps the colonel is right from his way of thinking. In any event, I'm asking that you remember how H Company always accepts its orders. That is far more important just now than what becomes of me. Above all things, make no complaint in the hearing of the men."

The captain's voice began to break. He blinked rapidly to keep the moisture from collecting in his eyes and running down his tanned cheeks. He turned suddenly on his heel and walked toward his command post alone. Sensing the eyes of his officers upon him, he carried himself erectly and walked with firm step. At the command post he strapped his bedding roll together, packed his meager personal effects in his musette bag and, without looking back, disappeared hurriedly in the direction of regimental headquarters.

IF CAPTAIN KNIGHTON expected any further explanation of the colonel's drastic action he was doomed to bitter disappointment when he reported at the old stone house at the base of a hill far to the rear where the regiment had established battle headquarters. His stay there only added to his utter demoralization. In fact, the colonel could not have received him more brutally had he been intent upon humiliating the officer publicly.

"Report to corps headquarters, Captain," the colonel instructed him bluntly in the presence of the headquarters personnel, at the same time shoving at him an official order of relief. "Corps will show you the route to the reclassification camp at Blois."

"May I speak with the Colonel—privately?" Knighton asked grimly. Mention of Blois, the military boneyard of the A. E. F., stung like a blow in the face.

"No!" affirmed the colonel. "You've heard my decision and I'm not going to change it. There's nothing to be gained by palaver. Outside, you'll find a motorcycle with side car waiting to take you and your effects as far as corps headquarters. From there you can catch a train to Blois on corps orders. Now climb out of here and get started."

Knighton accepted this crushing affront with a restrained salute and left the room resolutely, without loss of dignity, his legs betraying nothing of his leaden heart. A flood of righteous indignation welled within him, a burning impulse to turn back and demand an explanation of his relief. The injustice of it overwhelmed him. He would offer to have his company compared with any in the regiment in the whole division. He remembered that it was his right to demand an inspector, to make official complaint to higher authority against injustice.

This black flood of emotion he fought down as the motorcycle went whirring out of the regimental area. His reason asserted itself again and told him the hopelessness of open resentment at an hour when the Army was forming for the critical battle of the war. This was a time in which he must hold on to himself, assert the disciplined self-control that the Service had given him until the first staggering reactions had cleared from his mind and he could think it all out clearly for himself.

It was a slow and tortuous journey back to where the corps headquarters were located in a small French town. Only a few kilometers in actual distance, but the hot, dusty roads were choked with heavy columns of troops, artillery and supply trains that necessity forced to move by day in spite of the danger of observation and bombing. Sight of troops moving forward only added to the captain's burden of depression. There was a taunting accusation in their presence. He alone of all those thousands was moving towards the rear. He out of all those masses of Americans on the roads had been weighed in the military scales and cast back from the Front as unfit for the test of battle. The thought grew into a nightmare until he shut out the poignant bitterness of his reflections by closing his eyes tightly against the spectacle of marching men.

At corps headquarters he presented his orders to a sour faced major who received them with a show of annoyance and without so much as a glance at the captain. But as he read the orders, the major's attitude suddenly changed and he looked with a curious interest.

"So you're Captain Knighton?" he said. "Colonel Doran is expecting you in the G. 2 office. He told me to get you in there as soon as you showed up."

A middle aged lieutenant-colonel sat alone in a small bedroom into which Knighton was ushered. The colonel was bent over an array of maps and reports that littered a large table that nearly filled the room. But at the captain's entrance he looked up sharply and fixed the unhappy officer with small, restless green eyes that seemed intent on boring into every secret of his makeup.

"Captain, you seem to be having rather a disagreeable day of it," suggested Colonel Doran when he had completed his survey. He motioned Knighton to a chair.

"It is not a pleasant experience, sir, to be relieved of command," replied the captain evenly.

"Have you no idea nor intimation as to why you were relieved?"

"Not the least, sir. It was made clear to me by my colonel that I had failed—but how I had failed I was not informed."

"Good!" Colonel Doran's eyes beamed with satisfaction. "Then it was very well handled."

"But since I was not told it seemed to me a rank injustice, sir," Knighton protested. "If I may speak my mind, I thought I had made good with my com-

pany in every way up to the moment I was relieved without warning."

"You are right," Colonel Doran agreed. "It was most unjust to relieve you that way. Let me assure you that there was never any question of your fitness. In fact, your colonel said you were the best company commander in his regiment."

Captain Knighton gasped his perplexity at this amazing statement from a corps staff officer who, in effect, spoke the mind of the corps commander.

"Then it was all a—a mistake?" he asked breathlessly. "I'm to expect my command back?"

Colonel Doran changed the subject.

"According to the record on your qualification card," he said, "you were educated at Berlin and later at Heidelberg. Is that correct?"

"Yes, sir. My parents lived abroad for business reasons and it was necessary for me to get my education in Germany."

"You speak German fluently, the record shows. How fluently?"

"Possibly as well as I speak English, sir."

"Then there is no present possibility of returning you to your command, Captain Knighton. Your own words confirm everything."

"You mean to imply, sir, that there is any—any question about me—because I lived in Germany!"

Captain Knighton was betrayed into violent protest at such an insinuation. He got to his feet and stood regarding the colonel with snapping eyes.

"You misunderstand," said Colonel Doran, smiling. "It's because you are far too valuable to your country in another way just at present to leave you as a company commander. That is the sole reason you were relieved."

The captain sank back into his chair. So that was the mystery behind his humiliating relief? But he found small comfort in such a situation.

"May I say, sir," he spoke up crisply, "that I refused an appointment in the corps of interpreters when the war first broke out? It was because I wanted a more active part than translating German documents and interrogating prisoners."

"A very commendable spirit, Knighton, But we have no intention of using you in any such capacities. What we have in mind for you is of far more importance than anything else you could possibly do."

"Staff duty of any sort?" Knighton inquired dubiously. "If so, I've had no staff training of any sort."

"No, not exactly." Colonel Doran eyed him narrowly. "We're planning on sending you into Germany on a mission of the gravest importance to the whole Allied cause."

"As a—a spy!" Captain Knighton again was on his feet in protest.

"Well, call it that if you wish. You will go in the uniform of a German army officer, if you go, and I presume if they pick you up they'll give you a firing squad at sunrise. But the official term for such duty is counter-espionage—and there is no duty more important to our welfare right now than that."

"Sir, if I have any voice in the matter, I have no taste for espionage," Knighton objected dryly. "The work of a spy has never seemed to me an honorable rôle."

Colonal Doran laughed.

"A matter of sentiment, Knighton. Certainly it is honorable to help your country in the greatest way you are capable of doing. It is possible that you will be able to save thousands of lives of our men if you succeed in your mission. Your work might even have a big part in changing the whole course of history. Is that not as honorable as leading a company of riflemen into battle?"

"If I have a personal choice, I prefer to return to my company, sir."

The colonel observed him in solemn silence for some time.

"You have your rights in the matter, of course," he said at last. "But, unless you flatly refuse to accept the detail, as you have an official but not a moral right to do, we will send you tonight to the German military headquarters at Fere-en-Tardenois. Before you stand out on purely official rights, let me remind you

that everything depends upon checking this next Prussian drive. If their attack succeeds in reaching Paris, it can only lead to a German peace."

COLONEL DORAN got to his feet and ran a nervous finger over the network of colored lines on a map of northern France that lay across the top of his desk. The captain followed him with a sudden fascinated interest as he sketched in the dire military situation out of which nations were to be reshaped, the future of civilization charted during the next few crimson weeks.

"You see here," the colonel expounded, pointing to the positions held by the opposing masses of men. "You see here where the Germans drove their way through the British and French until they reached the Marne. There the force of their blow spent itself. For a month they have been waiting at the Marne—waiting for new strength and new men to fill in their battle losses for their general staff to plan the final crushing blow. Their active army extends roughly from Château Thierry to east of Rheims a short distance. They can have only one main objective—to drive a wedge through at some point on that line and force their way in mass into Paris. Then can't you see what happens? Can the Allies maintain their present main line from Verdun to the North Sea when the Germans have an army holding Paris? Never! No army can hold with the enemy in its rear in force. It means that a new line will have to be formed from Paris east to Verdun. That means the Germans will hold the whole north of France—and England will be cut off from her Allies! Can't you see the desperate stakes they are playing for? Can't you see why we've got to hold, no matter what it costs?"

"The men on the Front, where I've been, know they must fight to the last drop of blood in them, sir."

"Well, enough. But do you know what the greatest German weapon is—the thing upon which they must depend primarily for success?"

"I'm not certain I know just what the Colonel means."

"The weapon of—surprise. If they can fall upon us at an unexpected place in an unknown hour, they gain a tremendous advantage. Surprise is the greatest ally of an attacking army. With a successful surprise attack they can drive a vital wedge through before we can mass reserves enough to check their main blow. It is a simple matter to break the lines anywhere; and the Allies haven't men enough to hold a solid line invulnerable at all points. Wherever they make their main blow, we must mass men and artillery to check them before they make a fatal gap in our defense. A surprise shock may give them impetus enough to drive into Paris. Without surprise to help them, they're certain to fail. And that's what we're going to use you for—to rob them of their greatest weapon. If you succeed, you will have done a far greater service than a hundred captains of rifle companies."

"But my only military education has been with a rifle company, sir. I know nothing of espionage."

Colonel Doran shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"A mere matter of adaptability; a question of whether you are resourceful enough to outwit the German intelligence service. Speaking their language like a German, and wearing their uniform, you should have an excellent chance of getting by. Of course, it's a gamble with death; but really less of a gamble than leading a rifle company in the next crash."

Knighton's eyes brightened for the first time.

"The Germans have succeeded in getting themselves very much overrated," he asserted with spirit. "They're actually making themselves believe they are supermen. As a matter of fact, they're a very ordinary lot—certainly nothing above the average."

"But don't underestimate them in one respect—espionage," Colonel Doran cau-

tioned. "Some of their young officers excel as spies; and the fact is they've got their spies scattered around everywhere. That's the reason we relieved you the way we did. If we had simply sent for you in the usual way, it might have come to their attention and excited suspicion. For all we know, they have spies in your own company; perhaps some soldier who enlisted with you in the United States. It was a little hard on you to relieve you the way we did—but that was better than taking any chances of exciting suspicion."

"Thank you for that piece of information, sir," smiled Captain Knighton. "The injustice of it has been rankling deeply to this very moment."

"Are you ready to leave tonight, Captain?"

"I will make no choice, but I know how to obey orders without question, sir."

"Splendid. I knew from the manner in which you reacted to your relief that you had excellent qualities. There are two pieces of information we must have. First, the date and hour of the German attack, and then the place of their main blow. With that information in our possession, they are whipped. You will leave for Fere-en-Tardenois as soon as it is dusk, by airplane. A French pilot and a French secret service operator will accompany you as far as your destination, where you will work alone. You will get your final instructions and equipment from the French. An ambulance will take you to French headquarters immediately. Au revoir—and good luck."

CHAPTER II

GERMAN GROUND

CAPTAIN KNIGHTON bowed with mock solemnity as he gazed at the image that was reflected back to him by a long mirror hung in a secret dressing room inside a French hangar at La Ferte-sous-Jouarre. The transformation in his appearance was startling as he surveyed himself in the field uniform of a German officer. The uniform completely changed his whole aspect. That, a large rimless monocle held in his right eye without ribbon, and a recasting and waxing of the ends of his tiny mustache were his only disguise. And a secure disguise since it did not depend upon false hair or other flimsy artifices that might be detected by prying eyes.

"If your head were only a little more square, and had a little less brains and a little more conceit inside of it, you could qualify for pay in the German army without question, Lieutenant," he laughed at himself. "If H Company could only see me now—they'd shoot me on sight."

"*Ah, magnifique, mon Capitaine!*" A bustling little French liaison officer burst in the door and exclaimed his admiring approval of the captain's disguise. "Eef I do not know, I theenk you are one Boche officer."

"If you mean that as a compliment, remember it is more of an insult," the captain retorted lightly.

"Pardon, monsieur!" The Frenchman, with characteristic inability to sense American humor, turned scarlet and offered profuse apology for the affront. "A thousand times I make ze apology. But it is well zat ze *Capitaine* have ze appearance of a Boche. Ozerwise——"

He broke off with an expressive shrug of his shoulders and ran his hand suggestively across his neck.

"Under those circumstances," Knighton said, "the more like a German I look, the better." He added more seriously, "Not that I hold my life at any great price, but I have an aversion to being executed as a spy."

"It is ver' dangerous, *mon Capitaine*," affirmed the Frenchman. "Many men go as you go. Ver' few come back. Ze Boche ees a pig, but he is ze most damn' clevair."

"May I inquire," said Captain Knighton, voicing a question that had been in his mind and fretting him, "what is the fate of a spy? I mean do they hang him or put him before a firing squad?"

"It is ze present fashion, *mon Capitaine,*" replied the liaison officer, "to shoot wiz ze rifle." He raised his shoulders nearly to his ears in the inevitable French shrug. "You see, ze rope, he is too valuable zese days of war to waste on ze neck. Bullets, he is more plentiful."

Knighton registered marked relief.

"That's the only thing that has been bothering me—much," he replied easily. "It's especially revolting to think of being strangled to death like a rat or a felon. Shooting has, at least, some claim to respectability."

"Ah, but if ze *Capitaine* maintain ze *savoir faire,* if he is more smart zan is ze Boche, perhaps he will come back," the Frenchman cheered him. "Zere is one officer who is too much for ze Boche—Lieutenant Plewe of ze *armée française.* Three years he has been on duty as ze *espion.* It is ze Lieutenant Plewe who fly tonight wiz ze *Capitaine.*"

THE door opened again to admit a startling apparition. A German officer, clothed from head to foot in a faded field uniform of a Bavarian regiment. Knighton looked at him with amazement. The fellow was typically German, with the head and features of a German of the reservist or middle class military type. He had pouty thick lips, small, lusterless blue eyes that looked out from behind thick lenses, close cropped bristly hair that emphasized the squareness of his head, and the grim, disciplined manner that clung to the faces of all war maddened Germans.

"Lieutenant Plewe of the *armée française,*" exclaimed the French officer. "Also Leutnant Plewe of ze *armée allemande.* One and ze same man, always wiz ze one name."

The French espion, Plewe, struck his heels together with a metallic click and raised his hand to the leather vizor of his cap in the exaggerated Prussian military salute to a superior. Captain Knighton raised his own arm in simulation of the courtesy.

"*Non, non!*" the liaison officer protested. "Zat will nevair do." He took Knighton's arm and corrected the defects in his German salute. "Ze Boche will detect if you do not salute propaire," he admonished the American. "Zere is one thing you must know: to click ze heel and salute wiz ze arm. If you can do zat well—*bien!*"

The two French officers went to great pains in coaching Captain Knighton in the niceties of the German salute, taking care to train his arm to precisely the right angle, his fingers to the correct tenseness, his heels to the proper swiftness. They gave him no other military instruction, explaining that he must make his own way. In event of being closely challenged, he was to show his identification card and his orders, which were handed him by Lieutenant Plewe. These orders were from the headquarters of a group of German information units and indicated that Lieutenant Erich von Klossman was in command of the Seventh Reserve Searchlight Platoon and was authorized to make extensive reconnaissance in the vicinity of the front. The orders bore the approval and authentication of the Ninth German Army Headquarters, with the forged signature of a staff officer.

"But supposing some one should question me about searchlights?" Knighton suggested. "I've not so much as seen one in operation."

"Ah, zen you will fall back on ze orders of ze Boche General Von Mudra. He have command zat no one talk too much. If you are question too close—say your work he is secret."

"As a searchlight specialist officer you will have little trouble unless you arouse suspicion," said Lieutenant Plewe.

It was the first word he had spoken since entering the room. Captain Knighton could not escape a vague sense of distrust of the fellow, a feeling which the liaison officer must have sensed as he hastened to comment upon Lieutenant Plewe's virtues as a loyal operative.

"Lieutenant Plewe is a native of Alsace and one of our ver' best *espions,*" he ex-

plained. "Many times have he been wiz ze German army. Sometimes he go in rags and says he escape from a French prison camp. He is ver' much at home wiz ze German army. You see, *mon Capitaine,* he is one smarter man zan ze Boche. Nevair have zey suspect—although one time ze French suspect perhaps he is a Boche *espion.* Ha, soon we learn different."

THE shadows had deepened into thick dusk. Lieutenant Plewe indicated tersely that it was time to depart. Captain Knighton was given as his equipment only such minor necessities as he could carry in his pockets: a small safety razor, a small bar of soap, a comb, a pair of German field glasses and a German prismatic compass. The liaison officer also handed him two thousand marks in German currency and took his receipt for it.

"Ze marks may be ver' useful," said the Frenchman. He saluted. "*Au revoir, mon Capitaine. Bon voyage,*" he added as Knighton turned to follow the stolid Plewe out of the room to the flying field.

Plewe led the way silently through the gathering darkness to a plane that had been rolled out of its hangar ready for the takeoff. In the dim light Knighton saw a third man at the controls, also in the uniform of a German officer. He noted that the plane was marked with the large German cross, a Fokker reconnaissance plane to all appearances. Plewe indicated the harness of a parachute and assisted Knighton into the device. Then he gave him terse final instructions.

"You will land in the vicinity south of Nesles where there is a broad open plain," he said. "On landing you will bury your parachute and landing gear by means of a German intrenching shovel which you will carry down with you. Turn north from the point where you land, and in a short distance you will come to a plain, main traveled road. It may be filled with troops, in which event it will be easy to find. Follow the road due west and you will come to Fere-en-Tardenois. It is only a matter of five kilometers from Nesles to your village."

Plewe broke off and abruptly motioned Knighton into the cockpit.

"Where and when will I find the plane for the return?" the captain inquired bruskly, anxious to have such meager details as were being given him completed before the take-off.

The other looked at him without expression.

"The plane will return to La Ferte tonight. You will return to the Allied lines when you are ready. It is only fourteen kilometers to our lines, there are many roads and you will come by whatever means you think best at the time. Be sure to clear the cockpit the moment you get the word from the pilot that it is time to jump!"

Captain Knighton's heart leaped into his throat at these last minute disclosures. In the absence of other information, he had thought the plane would effect a landing to let him out. Also that it would return to pick him up at some secret rendezvous. It had never occurred to him that he was to drop out of the clouds tied to a frail silken parachute and later find his way back into the American lines in German uniform as best he might. But the habit of stilling the whispering voice of fear was strong enough within him that he quickly mastered himself and climbed with apparent sang-froid into the cockpit.

The plane was tuned up and ready for the start. A few turns of the propeller were followed by a singing roar. The plane glided easily down the runway at a swiftly increasing rate, slowly skimmed into the air and headed into the starry sky. The earth was lost in the black void below before the pilot quit climbing and set his course to the northeast.

At the end of half an hour of indirect traveling, the plane dipped down to a lower level. Suddenly the roar of the engines was stilled as the pilot shut off his motor and nosed close to the earth. At two thousand feet he straightened out again. There were no other sounds now except the rush of air and the singing of

struts. Dull roaring in the distance reached his ears. He recognized it as the firing of heavy artillery; harassing or interdiction fire which was a normal part of life at the Front.

"Climb clear and—jump!"

The command came suddenly, like the lash of a whip, through the speaking tube.

Knighton closed his eyes as he climbed dumbly out of the cockpit. A thousand fears flooded his brain. His whole being cried out against the plunge. But he moved automatically, propelled by the mysterious force that carries men forward in the line of duty. Impulsively he leaped into thin air and went catapulting down into the black nothingness with the force of a falling comet.

The swift fear rose in his tortured mind, as he fell, that the parachute had failed to open. The next instant might bring the end to his life. He drew his muscles taut in a frenzy as he went rushing down to what seemed certain doom. Then the air seemed to thicken under him. He felt himself jerked suddenly back from his terrific fall. The harness cut at his chest and shoulders. The force that broke his fall caused him to spin and turn dizzily and to leave him gently suspended in mid-air.

He managed to look up, and caught a glimpse of the open parachute over his head. It had not failed him. But it seemed to be holding him aloft. There was little sense of falling, now that his mad downward plunge had been arrested. The next moment a gray phantom appeared below and seemed to be mounting slowly to meet him. And in an instant he found himself precipitated in a pile on the ground, his legs buckled under him as from a fall off a high wall.

After extricating himself from the heavy silk folds of the parachute, which settled over his prostrated body, Captain Knighton, badly shaken but unhurt, got up and looked about him. There was no moon and the only light was from the few stars that were not obscured by high clouds. The ground about him was uneven but flat, with no sign of foothills, brush or timber in the limited range of his vision. He judged from this that he must have come to earth in the open plain south of Nesles, where it had been intended he should land. An occasional faint, dull rumble reached his ears, telling him that the heavy artillery had been left far behind and yet not entirely beyond earshot. There were no other sounds.

With the entrenching shovel he set about digging a shallow pit in the hard ground and soon succeeded in burying parachute and gear. He smoothed the mound down so that it would not attract the attention of suspicious eyes and, after consulting his compass, set out to the north in search of the highway into Fere-en-Tardenois.

At the end of a kilometer across open, uncultivated country in which he encountered neither habitation, grove nor troops in bivouac, a familiar sound greeted his ears. It rose in volume as he drew closer. Troops moving by night in heavy masses, field brogans pattering on the hard, dusty roads, creaking wheels of combat trains, lumbering of artillery caissons, clanking accouterment of mounted men.

His heart beat high as he was able to make out the black silhouettes of moving German fighting men. At a hundred yards from the road upon which they were passing, he sat down to observe them. The whole night was before him and there was ample time in which to lie still and observe the ghostly night procession. At the proper time he need only follow along beside the column until he reached Fere-en-Tardenois.

But as he lay watching them he saw suddenly that they were not moving west. The columns were headed due east. He consulted his compass again. Could it be that he had become confused as to directions, completely turned around? The compass verified his directions. He oriented himself by the dipper when the clouds cleared from its points. There could be no question of it. The German troops were marching away from the Front and not toward it. Furthermore,

as hour after hour of darkness passed, he saw that it was not a minor troop movement. The road was jammed with men in double columns, all headed with their full equipment to the rear, away from the scene of impending battle.

CHAPTER III

A CLASSMATE FROM HEIDELBERG

THE sun was rising out of a cloudless sky when the pseudo Lieutenant Erich Von Klossman walked into the little French village of Fere-en-Tardenois, muscle sore from his heavy landing out of the skies, weary from a sleepless night of strain and exertion, and ravenously hungry. The highway, which had teemed with marching men and ordnance, was suddenly empty, not even a courier appearing after the first light of dawn. Since the Germans long had boasted their supremacy of the air, he concluded that the cessation of the heavy troop movement long before daylight was not because of any fear of air attack. Therefore it could only mean that the spectacle must be shielded from sight of daring Allied reconnaissance planes.

The mystery of the eastward German march continued to bewilder him. It was flatly contrary to his every expectation, to the situation that had been painted for him within the Allied lines where feverish preparations went ahead day and night for a monstrous German blow. There was no explaining the mystery on the theory that those were weary troops being sent back into rest areas. For he had noted that they were combat troops of good morale. And there were whole regiments of heavy field artillery in the column—which would be withdrawn in no conceivable event were an attack impending.

Knighton walked down the main thoroughfare of Fere-en-Tardenois with apparent nonchalance. He was without plan or immediate direction. It was simply a matter of fitting himself into the German Army as best he might, avoiding suspicion, learning what he could casually and taking the fullest advantage of every opportunity that presented itself. His first thought now, aside from breakfast, was solving the enigma of the apparent German withdrawal.

He saw that Fere-en-Tardenois was heavily billeted with headquarters units and technical troops. There was no stirring of masses of men in the village, yet he could sense a seething activity under the surface, a tenseness that seemed to surcharge the air. Officers and men passing on the street moved at a sharp pace and seemed strained and preoccupied. Staff cars and motorcycles came whirring into the courtyard of a large stone building near the *hôtel de ville* which bore the legend "*KOMMANDIERENDER,*" all of them coming from the roads that led to the west and north. Men saluted him. He recognized the insignia of a captain, a stiff fellow with waxed mustache and monocle, and saluted him with all deference. The captain returned the salute casually, with an air of seeming unconsciousness of the junior's existence. Knighton smiled to himself. The fellow's strut and air were not a new sight. It was a characteristic of the pre-war Prussian military caste he had observed so well in college days. The attitude of mind that had brought on the war, he told himself.

A motorcycle rider drew up at the curb near him, dismounted and became a wax mannikin at salute. When Knighton acknowledged the salute, the German soldier solicited permission to speak to his superior and inquired the location in the village of a Bavarian special unit.

"The 4th Bavarian Pioneer Battalion, commanded by Captain Berhhofer," the soldier said.

The bogus Von Klossman fixed the courier with a severe stare through his monocle.

"Are there no military police detachments in the village?" he demanded in simulated annoyance.

"Will the Leutnant forgive, but I have met none," said the soldier, very uneasy at the officer's displeasure. "I bear a mes-

sage for the Captain Berhhofer whom I cannot identify at sight."

"Perhaps he has moved east with the other troops," suggested the officer. "Are you not aware that our troops are moving off to the east?"

"But the Bavarian pioneers are not scheduled for Fismes until the day after tomorrow," said the soldier. "It is Captain Berhhofer's orders I bring to him."

"A question of interest to me," Knighton put in quickly. "You are a courier who goes to many places along the Front. Do not you find our men in the ranks unhappy that they must move back?"

"It is a hard march for the foot troops," responded the soldier. "But all know the wisdom of the order, for it will save many lives and make more sure the great day of *Friedensturm*."

"When and what do you mean by that?" Knighton shot at him.

But the sharp thrust did not have the effect of startling the German soldier into a vital disclosure. As he drew himself up at salute, the officer read sudden frightened caution in his face.

"I'm not one to talk too much," said the soldier. "The Leutnant need not have any fear that I am one who does not know the orders and how to obey them."

"An excellent spirit," Knighton complimented him, feeling a definite relief that he had aroused no deeper suspicion in the German soldier's mind than that of being a possible German Intelligence officer testing out the prudence of a courier. "See that you do as well at all times. I'm sorry I can not help you find your way to the Bavarians."

FISMES. The soldier had at least disclosed one fact which indicated that the troops moving to the east had Fismes on the River Vesle as their immediate objective. But what possible strategy could that involve, since Fismes was half a night of hard marching farther to the rear? The soldier had also disclosed to him that the utmost secrecy was being imposed upon the German army concerning whatever plan was afoot. He passed down the length of the city, turned back by another route and again traversed the main thoroughfare. No further opportunity presented itself to strike up a conversation. Every one seemed in a hurry, bent on a specific mission. He noted that officers passing him were often hollow eyed and blinking as if they had pored over maps and orders throughout the night with little or no sleep.

One disagreeable discovery forced itself upon him. The French villagers had abandoned the town ahead of the German invaders. The shops were deserted except where put to use by some unit as a headquarters. There were no cafés in operation. This meant that his fast must go unbroken; and the gnawing in his stomach long since had become insistent. To solicit food at a German mess might prove a dangerous experiment. He weighed and rejected, as far too risky, a rash plan of presenting his orders boldly at the headquarters and asking for a billet. After all, he reminded himself, the aching void of his stomach would prove less painful than the ministrations of a sunrise firing squad.

Two hours of alert marching about the village yielded him nothing better than a realization of the difficulties that hedged him in and of the grave danger that dogged his heels at every step. Sooner or later, he foresaw, an officer with no other occupation than walking the streets would be certain to attract the attention of the military police in this buzzing military beehive. Since it was impossible to leave the city afoot without challenge, he cast about for a rendezvous inside of Fere-en-Tardenois, one where he might remain out of sight until nightfall.

A derelict stone cellar in a dank alley in the heart of the village offered him refuge. But before condemning himself to further starvation he presented himself at a nearby unit kitchen and entered with all the insolent assurance of a critical inspector.

The chef and kitchen police, seated on boxes waiting to ladle the noon mess out

to hungry German soldiers, leaped to attention upon his entry. The chef stepped forward fearfully, saluted with a precise click of arm and heels, and prepared to lift the lids from his steaming pans. The officer paused in his inspection over a huge cauldron of meat soup, sniffed it critically and asked for a ladle which was delivered into his hand with alacrity by the chef.

"Excellent," said the inspector, tasting it and smacking his lips approvingly. "The best I have tasted since last I was in Berlin. You are a chef in a hundred, and your company is fortunate to have such soup as this."

The chef's eyes beamed with amazed joy and he stammered his confused gratitude that his poor soup had pleased the Leutnant. He ladled out a bowl of it at the Leutnant's request and stood gloating while the officer gorged himself. After eating his fill, Knighton bartered for a battered *ersatz* canteen, filled it with soup, gathered up several small tins of iron ration, gave the cook a final expression of appreciation in the form of a ten mark note and departed.

"A fair exchange," he smiled to himself. "The inspector ridden fellow possibly was as hungry for a bit of praise as I was for some of his terrible soup."

DARKNESS had fallen when he emerged from a heavy sleep on the damp floor of the foul smelling cellar. He drank half of his supply of cold soup, ate the contents of a tin of German army weenies and emerged into the street. The village rang with the heavy crash of hobnailed boots on cobblestones. The nightly march was on again and he saw, as he reached the street, that the Germans continued marching to the east. Again there was heavy field artillery sandwiched in, and machine guns, light howitzers, *Minenwerfers*. He circled the village several times and walked down the column. By the uniform insignia he identified in the dim light troops from Munster, from Chemnitz, Pfundstadt, Weimar, Brandenburg, Bavaria, Prussia—a veritable cross section of a German army corps. All headed toward the rear. Toward Fismes on the Vesle where there was no active front, no enemy; and where there had not been for more than a month since the German hordes swept down from the north and left the Vesle far behind them in their mad drive on the French capital.

The column, as he observed, was as inaccessible, as inscrutable as a monarch passing by in state. The Teutons held their places in close column, bent forward under their heavy packs but marching with the ease of men who are not heavy with fatigue. There were no stragglers, no confusion. Officers and men remaining on duty in Fere-en-Tardenois gave them only a casual interest. There was no shouting back and forth, no interchange of badinage between the marching column and the observers on the sidewalk as when American volunteers are passing at route order. Discipline was perfect, the stolid, silent discipline of Prussia.

By midnight Knighton sensed that he had wandered the streets to the very limit of prudence. Besides, his vigil had yielded him nothing very definite. He had stood alternately back in the black shadows out of sight, looking and listening for a conversation in the ranks, and had traversed the street on the alert for some one who might lift the cloak of mystery from the German retreat. But fortune did not favor him. The fear began to oppress him that the mission was a hopeless one. He remembered the words of the French liaison officer. Many went into Germany. Few returned. He saw now that it was a gamble. Not without gross indiscretion could he so much as learn the purpose that moved these tens of thousands of men. Indiscretion that might only lead to his execution as a spy before he could make any use of the information. How insuperable a task, then, to learn the things he had been sent to find: the hour at which the Kaiser would next send his mannikins to blaze the crimson trail to Paris; the place at which they would

attempt to drive their mailed fist through the allied lines.

He nerved himself to turn into a café near the large headquarters at the *hôtel de ville*. In passing he had observed that it had been put in operation by the Germans as a sort of canteen or officers' club. Each time he went by, he noted that there were small groups of officers seated at tables drinking beer or wine. Turning back to the café, he entered, took a seat at a small table, ordered a bottle of Rhine wine of familiar and accepted vintage and sat back with bored unconcern.

There were a score of officers in the place at the moment, drinking, talking noisily but, as he soon learned, of things at home. They were mostly junior officers, none of them above the grade of captain, and they came and went, evidently dropping in for brief relaxation from headquarters' desks and duties. Presently there was a commotion at a table in the center of the room when a slim, bearded Prussian Leutnant stood up, called for attention and lifted his stein above his head.

"*Friedensturm!*" he proposed.

Feet clattered, heels rang and every officer in the room was instantly on his feet at attention, his glass held high. Knighton got up and raised his glass.

"*Friedensturm!*" echoed the assembled officers. "*Der Tag!*"

KNIGHTON sat down with beating heart. He caught the significance that lay in those words. He knew it was a German practise to give a simple and stirring name to their large attacks. *Friedensturm*—easily the "Attack of Freedom"; the attack that was intended to carry them to Paris and bring a German victory. If there might have been any doubt in his mind, it was removed by the cries of "The Day" that followed the word when it was proposed as a toast. There could be no mistaking the significance of "*Der Tag.*" It had been traditional for a generation or more as indicating the great day when the German war dogs should be unleashed to put the whole world up a tree.

As he resumed his seat, he became conscious that an officer had moved to a vacant place at his table. He looked up to see a young Prussian *Leutnant* standing over him. The officer bowed slightly.

"May I have a seat at your table, my friend?" the Prussian asked, a certain quality of cold, reserved politeness in his voice.

"By all means sit down," Knighton urged him, getting to his feet and waiting until the other was first seated. "It is rather stupid here drinking alone."

He took in the details of the officer swiftly during this moment of formality. The Prussian was young, very intelligent and elegant of manner although he lacked a trifle of the polished arrogance of the military caste. He wore a close cropped black beard and a small mustache with points waxed into bristling black lines. His eyes were a mild blue, but with a frozen glint about them. He appeared to take no stock of Knighton, looking rather across the room in a bored way.

"*Friedensturm,*" mused the Prussian. "There is that in the word to stir the blood. It is not long to wait until it becomes a glorious reality. I am impatient to be in Paris again—Paris under German hands."

"Paris will be a beautiful sight to me," responded Knighton. "It seems such a long time to wait."

"It will not be so long," replied the other. "Time will move swiftly after *Friedensturm.* You must know the date of that by this time? The fifteenth of July is no longer as much a secret as it might be."

"Less than a week!" Knighton put in adroitly. He followed the lead swiftly. "But I thought we attacked the night of the fourteenth?"

"The fifteenth," said the German with assurance. "I thought you must certainly know that date. Even the men returning from leave at Charleville have the day on their stupid lips. It has been difficult to still their wagging tongues."

"But in effect it is the fourteenth," Knighton baited him. "It is that night which will see great events for our armies."

"Our troops will hardly be massed by then," the German corrected him. "The last of them will not have returned from the Vesle rehearsal until early on the night of the fifteenth. But at the first daylight of Sunday morning they will strike with the fury of *Friedensturm*. Have you not been to Fismes to observe the grand rehearsal?"

Knighton ordered cigarets of an orderly, not daring to trust his voice in reply for the moment following the astounding disclosure he had just heard. The exodus to the east was suddenly cleared up. A titanic maneuver, a rehearsal on the Vesle for the crossing of the Marne. Typical German thoroughness. A token of the Teuton determination to make of *Friedensturm* a vital blow. And the German had given him the date of attack. He now lacked only information of the place of the main blow.

"It is a wonderful thing—the rehearsal at Fismes," he replied presently.

"You have been there?" persisted the German officer.

"It is perhaps not prudent that we discuss too many details," said Knighton. "General Von Mudra's orders are rather specific on that score."

The Prussian gave a short, hard laugh.

"But what does it matter," he demanded, "when we know that there is no harm to be done? I am certain you will not repeat anything I might say—or I would not speak quite so freely."

"Nevertheless we must remember the spirit of our orders," Knighton admonished him.

The Prussian officer ordered champagne, a very select brand, and ceremoniously filled the two glasses.

"It is pleasant to see you," he said, lifting his glass. "I have been expecting you long. Here's to your very good conduct tomorrow—and may you have a pleasant journey."

"I begin to fear that you have mistaken me for another," smiled Knighton. "You have the advantage of me. We did not present ourselves. I am Leutnant Erich Von Klossman of the 7th Bavarian Searchlight Company."

"Indeed," the Prussian said in a caustic drawl. "Then, since the champagne is opened, let us drink just the same. Can you imagine whom I took you to be?"

"I haven't the least idea, Leutnant." Knighton laughed reminiscently and added, "Frequently though, I have been mistaken for a certain Herr Von Kleber, a resident of Berlin."

"And I could have sworn," said the Prussian coolly, "that you are in fact Captain Wallace Knighton, United States Army, until very recently the commander of a company of foot rifles. Alias Von Klossman."

THE blood leaped into Knighton's brain and staggered him momentarily as he heard the Prussian's words. But he instantly mastered himself in the face of the desperate game he now played, a game in which his greatest ally was self-possession. He looked across the table and fixed the German with a cool hard stare.

"The Leutnant has been drinking too much, I fear," he said. "Otherwise I might be inclined at offense. You carry your drolleries to dangerous lengths tonight."

"Let us not waste words, Knighton," the Prussian snapped back. "Do you not recognize me? I am Von Schoeler of the old class at Heidelberg. The abominable hair on my face, which I have been forced by the war to wear occasionally, may have concealed my identity from you before. But look closely. Do you not remember the peculiar scar under my right eye—at which you once laughed, saying I had filled it with red pepper after I had been pinked in a school duel?"

"You are raving, Leutnant," Knighton replied coldly, attempting to conceal his sudden recognition of a classmate. "If

you persist in this folly I shall lose my temper."

"And I shall lose mine—which is more to the point," said Leutnant Von Schoeler. "It is time to throw off the mask. I made certain of your identity before I sat down here. There is a slight curve in the line of your nose, a thin perpendicular line between your eyes, a mole on your neck very slightly to the right of your jugular vein. Those peculiar markings leave no room for question. Fingerprints could not betray you to me more completely. Besides, this is no chance meeting. I have been expecting you over here for some time past."

Knighton lighted a cigaret with steady hand and blew smoke at the ceiling with seeming nonchalance. His ability to control himself in this crisis mildly surprised him. He wondered that he felt no fear, only an alertness, a keying up of all his faculties as he sought some tangible means of escape from the desperate trap into which he had fallen.

"If it amuses you to speak in this foolish way, do not hesitate on my account," he responded tranquilly.

"If it amuses you to think you are going to outwit me and escape from this room, let me assure you that you are without the slightest hope," Von Schoeler retorted. He turned to one side and snapped his fingers. A bristling German mannikin, wearing sidearms, stamped over to him and saluted. "See that your men remain about the door—outside," he commanded. "The Leutnant who is seated with me here must not leave this room alive, unless in my company."

As the mannikin saluted and turned to the door, Von Schoeler fixed Knighton with a superior smile.

"Pardon the formality, but you may consider yourself under arrest, Captain Knighton. The charge against you is the most serious one that can be made against any man in time of war. It is that of being a spy. You are familiar with the penalty for that offense when caught in disguise across the lines."

"Supposing, Von Schoeler, for the sake of amusement, that your ridiculous statements were true," Knighton drawled. "Supposing an ancient classmate had returned in the line of duty for a brief official visit. What—what would you do about it?"

Von Schoeler filled his own glass and took a sip of champagne.

"Do you remember young Walters?" he inquired.

"I very naturally am not familiar with the characters in your unusual dream."

"Pardon. I did not mean to trap you. I have plenty of evidence against you without using subterfuge, as you very soon shall know. I withdraw my question. As you will remember, nevertheless, young Walters was an excellent young fellow as we regarded him in those days. But a timid sort, wouldn't you say—almost effeminate? Well, it may both interest and surprise you to learn that he died magnificently. Not a whimper nor a quiver of the eyelid as he faced the end."

"In action, I take it. Or of some malady?"

"Before a German firing squad at Roye. He was the first of the old class to come over."

"That is very interesting, indeed."

"Then you will remember the Irishman, O'Connor, who did so well at athletics and psychology. A rough uncouth fellow in many respects. I was most curious to observe the manner of his demise. He died less smoothly. Not without courage, though. He refused the blindfold when he faced our squad at Douai, but he died swearing madly at our brave soldiers. Nothing short of blasphemy. French and Thomas died neatly at Cambrai. They came across the line together disguised as Belgian refugees. Quite a reunion of the old class, wouldn't you say? You will remember that we were to have a reunion of all those from abroad one day. It has been a reunion that we had hardly foreseen."

"With you in the rôle of—er—class master of ceremonies we might put it," Knighton smiled caustically.

"Exactly. Why not? Did they not know they would be detected? Do they

think Germans are dumb! At the outset of the war we suspected those of the old class would be back." His voice became bitter. "Back to spy on the very country that gave them their education. It has been a pleasure to me to ferret them out and let them pay the logical penalty for their treachery."

"If I am called upon for any comment upon your narrative," said Knighton, "it is that, had duty forced me to betray old college friends to the firing squad, I at least would have the decency not to boast openly of the fact."

"A neat insult, Captain. And rather bold for a man in your unhappy position. But since you have made the point, let me remind you that I gave each one of them a chance for his life. I shall give you the same chance. It is you and you alone who will decide your fate. I am the last one to want your blood on my hands."

"Just what am I to gather from that fancy?" Knighton inquired without eagerness.

Leutnant Von Schoeler glanced about the room.

"We are certain to be overheard here," he said, "particularly if either of us should speak aloud in temper. You will come with me to my billet. But first let me warn you against folly. A false step and you will be shot down from behind without further warning from me or my men."

THEY passed out into the black night and walked together down the street through which the troops still marched. Hard upon the captain's heels clung several soldiers, almost stepping upon him. This vigil circumvented any thought the captive might entertain of bolting into the darkness and taking his chances in flight. Before they had gone more than a score of paces, Von Schoeler directed the captain into a black hallway. His soldiers closed the door, lighted the way with a torch into a room, and there lighted a large acetylene lamp. A roomy office was disclosed, equipped with desk and chairs left behind by the French. On the walls were posted several German military maps showing in detail the terrain from east of Fere-en-Tardenois to just west of Paris.

Von Schoeler took the precaution of having his prisoner searched for weapons, unfastened the holster of his own Luger automatic suggestively, and motioned Knighton to a chair across the table from him.

"The chance I wish to offer you," he said at once, "is that of making good to us your treachery. You came here to betray the Fatherland that gave you so much. But we are not bloodthirsty. If you will undo the harm you have attempted to do us, you will be free to go to a prison camp safe and alive, to remain until the end of the war, when you will be freed to return home."

"Your thoughts are not hard to follow," Knighton said coolly. "But make what you have to say to me more specific. What is it you want to know?"

"To begin with—the exact strength and dispositions of the American divisions who hold the sector from Dormans to Château Thierry."

"I gather then that the Americans are in the way of your main drive on Paris?"

"Your deduction is correct, Captain Knighton. What would not your commanders give for the information you now possess!"

The American felt a sudden hot impulse to fight his way out, to gamble desperately in an effort to get that portentous information back to the Allied lines. So it was upon the Americans the full force of the blow would fall? Upon his own regiment? Upon H Company! The decision to take a hard chance with his life flashed into his mind. He faced the Prussian threateningly, not in the hope that the other would believe him but that he might be led outside again for further investigation, out into the black village where there was at least a slender chance of escaping a fusillade of pistol bullets.

"Leutnant Von Schoeler," he snapped. "I have tolerated your poor wit as long as I desire. I am Leutnant Von Klossman, a

loyal officer of the Kaiser, and I demand that I be taken to headquarters for identification. You will find that I am known to your superiors and you will be required to apologize for your mad conduct."

Von Schoeler looked at him in genuine surprise.

"I can't imagine what you're up to now, Knighton," he said. "Were we not taught that while two men may look alike, they can not possibly have the same body markings and peculiarities of expression? If by any chance I have made a mistake, I will make full amends. But that is impossible, as I see it."

He went to the door, opened it, and gave terse instructions to one of his men. Knighton heard the outer door close. The clatter of hobnails pounding hurriedly along the cobblestones sounded for an instant above the dim roar of the marching column out in the street. Von Schoeler sat down again.

"We will settle this matter definitely to the satisfaction of all," he said. "If by some strange miracle of mistaken identity you are really Von Klossman and have been amusing yourself at my expense—well, we shall laugh together over my unhappy mistake. If, as I am convinced, you are Captain Knighton, it will interest me deeply to observe if you can die as well as the others of the old class."

CHAPTER IV

DAWN

THEY sat in silence for many minutes, Von Schoeler smoking tranquilly, his hand on his Luger against surprise. Hurrying hobnails sounded just outside again; the outer door of the billet banged open. Von Schoeler drew open the door of his office.

"Ah, I am delighted to see you, Leutnant," he exclaimed. "An important matter of identification. I was fearful you might not have arrived from Fismes."

Captain Knighton was unable to control the look of surprise that swept over his face as the officer entered. It was Lieutenant Plewe, the French *espion* who had accompanied him from the Allied lines.

"Leutnant Plewe, do you find yourself able positively to identify this officer?" Von Schoeler inquired.

Plewe fixed the prisoner with his phlegmatic eyes and looked at him closely, without emotion, for several moments.

"Yes, I am positive of him," he reported. "He is the American I brought across the lines with me. We dropped him out with a parachute near Nesles. I meant to turn him in myself on reaching Fere-en-Tardenois tonight."

"Would you say now, Herr Captain," Von Schoeler addressed Knighton with a sneering smile, "that your case is not ready for the prompt action of a military court? It will not take ten minutes to put you before the court, convict you and hear sentence of death pronounced."

Knighton stood glancing at the treacherous Plewe in malevolent loathing. Words of bitter denunciation were rising to his lips, when he saw the fellow lift an eyebrow significantly as if to communicate his fealty, the fact that his apparent treachery was a ruse forced by desperate circumstances. The captain choked back his words. His mind worked swiftly. Before a court Plewe would be forced to confirm his testimony. He saw that Plewe was armed, that they must act now or never. Without warning, he flashed a devastating blow across to Von Schoeler's jaw and leaped upon him as the German fell, clutching tightly at his throat to prevent outcry. If he succeeded, then Plewe could care for the men in the hall with his Luger. A terse, guttural command rang in his ears as he lay struggling with Von Schoeler.

"Stand back or I shall fire!"

He saw Plewe standing over him, pistol in hand, his jaws set. Plewe repeated the order, pressed the muzzle of his Luger against Knighton's side.

"If I speak again to you, I shall fire," he threatened. "Stand back! I warn you for the last time."

Two soldiers came into the room from the dark hallway, attracted by the commotion, and drew their pistols. Knighton stepped back in surrender. To do otherwise, he saw, would be nothing short of suicide. Since Plewe was unmasked as a German spy at last, Knighton's one chance of escape from the room was gone.

Von Schoeler got to his feet and rubbed his jaw solicitously while a soldier rescued his monocle from the floor. The German controlled the tempest that seethed within him admirably. He fixed the glass in over his eye and deliberately lighted a cigaret with steady hand. His poise and dignity thus reestablished, he faced the American in a humor of sinister coolness.

"It is fortunate for you," he said, "that Leutnant Plewe was here to save your life. Else my soldiers would have deprived you of even one last glimpse of the sun in the morning."

"I have a natural aversion to the bite of a snake—or the stab of a Judas Iscariot!" Knighton retorted with a malevolent glare at Plewe.

"You do a brave and loyal officer a very grave injustice by such a remark," said Von Schoeler. He dismissed the two soldiers from the room with a snap of his finger. "But now that we understand each other perfectly and the masks are off, let me ask you for the last time to make your choice between a prison camp and a firing squad."

"Did not your snake, Plewe, belly around behind our lines?" Knighton retorted. "Or was it that his dumb German brain was unequal to getting what you wanted to know?"

"Again let me remind you that you are unjust to a splendid officer. The stupid French grew suspicious of Leutnant Plewe and allowed him little opportunity to see everything we wanted him to learn. But he saw much. So there are only a few simple points left for you to clear up—a few points along the Marne to the west and south of Château Thierry where the river makes a great bend."

"I'll give you one valuable piece of information on that subject, Von Schoeler. When your war dummies try to goose-step through the Americans, they'll find the traveling is far easier in the direction of Berlin."

"Insolent ox!" snapped Von Schoeler. "There are none more stupid than you Americans. I myself shall have the honor of giving the Americans their commands when the Germans strike. In fact, one reason I have so little interest in your firing squad is that I will not be here at sunrise to say farewell if you persist in—in joining the old class."

"Your conceit nauseates me, Von Schoeler."

"I will not waste time in quarreling with you. Come, what verdict do you pass upon yourself?" He stepped to a map on the wall and pointed to the American sector. "A few questions and——"

Captain Knighton cut in with a short laugh.

"You can go to hell, Von Schoeler," he said.

A MILITARY court of three sleepy-eyed *Leutnant obersts* went through the formality of trying the prisoner on the charge of espionage. They sat in a stately French chamber at the *hôtel de ville* of Fere-en-Tardenois, Captain Knighton standing before them under guard of a squad of grenadiers. The testimony was brief and to the point. Leutnant Von Schoeler told of recognizing the American, of the deception attempted upon him in the café, of the final assault made upon him at his quarters in an attempt to escape. Leutnant Plewe told of coming with Knighton from La Ferte-sous-Jouarre by airplane and of seeing the prisoner leap from the cockpit above Nesles with a parachute attached to his body.

"Vot haf you to say?" inquired a ponderous, walrus eyed *Oberstleutnant* who sat at the right of the court as its senior member and spokesman.

"Nothing," the prisoner replied in German, ignoring the court's attempt at English.

The three officers moved their heads close together for a few moments of mumbled conference. The spokesman stood up, fingering his flaring mustache and fixing Knighton with his dead eyes.

"The finding of the court is guilty," he announced in German. "The sentence is that you be shot dead by the military police at the official hour of sunrise, which is 5:01 o'clock of this date, June twelfth, 1918." He turned to a junior officer in charge of the armed detachment. "Remove the prisoner for execution at the time directed. The court is adjourned."

When the heavy oaken door of a cell in the cellar of the *hôtel de ville* creaked shut behind him, Captain Knighton consulted his wrist watch. It was three o'clock, German time, which meant that it was four o'clock in the Allied lines less than fifteen miles distant. Through the upper reaches of a heavily barred window he could see that the first gray touch of approaching dawn was in the air. There remained exactly two hours and one minute of life for him. He stood watching the second hand of his watch on its rounds. It gripped him with a grim fascination as it hurried around its tiny circle. Yet for all its hurry it seemed an interminable period before it completed its round. It surprised him to find that a single minute was so long a time. He watched it complete another circle and another. An hour seemed to have passed in those three minutes. He made a computation. One hundred and eighteen times more the busy little hand must swing the circle before time would cease to matter.

The preoccupation suddenly startled him. He noted the persistence, the inevitableness in which the second hand held to its course. Vision of a firing squad rose before him, thoughts of seeing the sun for the last time. Then what? He wondered whether he would be able to walk out coolly, bravely, with the men who were to shoot him. In the past ten months strange qualities had presented themselves out of his inner nature, qualities he had not known were there, qualities that had asserted themselves under the stress of war, inherent qualities that might have lain dormant within him had life not dragged him from his charted course. At the last moment, when he stood face to face with Death, would he be able to stand there, superior to Death? Smiling at those who leveled their muskets at his heart with trembling hands?

He found that, though it was dank in the cell, perspiration dripped from his forehead. His face felt leathery and drawn. His heart was pounding. He turned resolutely from thoughts of the end. He must not think of the supreme test—not even when it came. Thought of his fate would only terrorize him, in the end unnerve him, if he gave free rein to his throbbing brain. He forced his mind away from the torment of his tragic fate and sought occupation in a study of his cramped cell and a nervous pacing of its stone floor.

The ancient French prison cell was strong, well preserved and stoutly barred. Knighton quickly perceived that it offered him no conceivable chance of escape. He gave up trying to divert his mind with hopes of a possible avenue of flight. He was surely walled in by steel and stone, and he could hear the thumping feet of an armed automaton passing back and forth across the door of the cell, close outside.

Sight of a faint touch of red through the barred window caused him to start violently in spite of himself. It was a vague glow, the veriest touch of crimson, yet its significance shook him with a pang of terror. He set his jaws, resolutely asserted his self-control. A glance at his watch startled him again. It was half past three o'clock. While he had not been watching it, that little second hand had been whirring around with the speed of the wind. He made another calculation, forcing himself to think coolly, without panic. Ninety-one minutes remained until the hour of the German official sunrise. The sun itself would be over the horizon in another hour.

HE HEARD a sharp challenge outside, an exchange of gutturals. In a moment the oaken door of his cell creaked open. Lieutenant Plewe entered alone, stolid, unemotional, inscrutable as ever. There wa no remorse in his face, no shame nor apology; only the cold, official, disciplined expression that seemed never to forsake him.

"I have been sent to talk with the Captain," Plewe announced.

Knighton eyed him with disgust.

"I do not wish my last moments polluted by your foul presence," he shouted, giving vent to his pent up loathing of the fellow. "I have nothing whatever to say to you."

Plewe instructed the sentry to close the door.

"It is well you spoke as you did, for the sentry's ears," he said. "But we have no time to lose. Bind my arms quickly with my belt, strap me to the chain ring there on the floor. I will tell you what else to do as you work."

Knighton's faculties were stricken for the moment by this swift turn of the tide that disclosed Plewe's loyalty to France. He stood in gaping impotence as Plewe unbuckled the belt and handed it to him with his Luger automatic and wallet.

"Act quickly," Plewe commanded. "You must make every moment count. It is a desperate chance; but the chances are not all against us. Nothing is more important than for you to get back to our lines immediately. Put on my coat and cap. I dare not give you the password—that would convict me later. But whisper something to the sentry, and when he leans close to you to catch the password, crash him with the butt of the Luger. There will be another sentry as you reach the top of the stairway. Treat him the same way—if he stops you. Outside is my car and driver——"

"But why should not we both make the bolt?" Knighton broke in, his senses again acute as the chance of escape was unfolded. "They will only stand you up to take my place, if you risk staying here."

"They may suspect; but in the end they will believe me," Plewe assured him. "Your foolhardy thought of escape from Von Schoeler's billet, when his place was hedged in by military police, gave me the opportunity to prove myself. My mission here is not ended. I came for another purpose and must stay until after the German attack has been made."

Plewe stripped off his coat and threw himself on the floor.

"Hurry," he said as Knighton bound him. "In my wallet you will find my German orders. Use them when you are halted on the road—and drive like mad. Kill the driver of my car if he becomes suspicious. Now listen with great care: Take the road that runs due south from Fere-en-Tardenois. Keep always to the main road, which will be clear after you have passed a highway turning to the right one kilometer out of the village. At the end of twelve kilometers you will come to the village of Jaulgonne. Leave your car outside the village and avoid entering the place. Detour on foot, keeping to your left until you come to the banks of the Marne at that point. If you can not swim across eighty meters of swift current, hide out until night and steal a boat in which to cross. Once you are on the other side of the river, you will find our troops. They will be everywhere. They will take you a prisoner to Varennes where you can identify yourself promptly and be sent on down to headquarters. Report that I will return safely at the proper time. Now move."

"Can you accept my apologies," the captain whispered abjectly, "for the unfortunate insults——"

"This is not the time to talk of such things," said Plewe impatiently. "If the sentry should look in on us, you are lost.

"*Bon voyage,* my comrade."

CHAPTER V

REUNION

AT AMERICAN corps headquarters late in the afternoon, Captain Knighton, shaved, bathed, dined and comfortable in his olive drab uniform,

completed the final details of his verbal report to the assistant chief of staff, second section.

"You have done magnificent work, Knighton," beamed Colonel Doran. "Your information verifies what we have gotten from prisoners, including the disclosures made by a captured grenadier officer whose tongue the French loosened with wine. The Germans have lost their greatest weapon—surprise. And their boasted *Friedensturm* will wreck the German army. With three days left to mass Allied men and guns, we'll stop them at the Marne before they can even get a start for Paris. You are certain to be rewarded for your work."

"But I want full credit given to the French Lieutenant Plewe," said Knighton. "Except for his help I might not have gotten any farther than a German firing squad."

"You are too modest, Knighton," the colonel responded. "The fact remains that you made your own way back to the Allied lines in record time—a remarkable achievement in itself."

"Yes, sir, but again I must give credit to Lieutenant Plewe. After he gave me his Luger and instructions, all I had to do was bowl over a couple of German dummies with the butt of the pistol. I feared I might have to murder the chauffeur, but his stupidity made that unnecessary. I had to show my orders several times along the way, but the only real close call I had was in swimming across the Marne. I thought, once or twice, I never would make it to the south bank."

"Well, your modesty is refreshing to say the least. In any event we refuse to minimize what you've done. If you'll accept a G-2 detail, I think we can have promotion for you very shortly."

"I have only one request to make, sir: reassignment to command of H Company," Knighton replied stoutly.

"If that is what you want—it will be arranged at once."

"Thank you, sir."

An orderly entered the room and handed the colonel a set of French assignment orders. Colonel Doran thought a moment, scribbled briefly on a sheet of paper and handed it to the orderly.

"I've asked that your orders be issued at once," he said. "I'll send you to your regiment in my car. And it has just occurred to me that I can send Lieutenant Favieres along with you. He is presenting his orders from the French and goes to your regiment as liaison officer. The ride will give you an opportunity to get acquainted with him—which may stand you in good stead one day. I'll have him report while we're waiting for your orders."

Lieutenant Favieres entered a moment later, a suave, trim Frenchman, smooth shaven, alert and brimming with French official politeness. He bowed and saluted in great deference before extending his hand to Colonel Doran.

"Ze ver' great honaire, *mon Colonel*," he exclaimed. "I am deeply delighted to be attach for duty with ze gallant *Américains*."

"That is very gracious of you, Lieutenant Favieres," Colonel Doran responded in his best manner. "I want to present one of our officers, Captain Knighton, who will—ah, I perceive you have met before."

The French liaison lieutenant stood gaping in the manner of one who is confronted by an apparition. He recovered himself quickly as the captain stood smiling at him, saluted and offered his hand.

"Sir," Knighton addressed the colonel bluntly, "may I have a word with the gentleman alone. A matter of very grave importance, sir, which I'll explain later to your satisfaction."

"Why, of course," assented Colonel Doran, withdrawing from the room with a slight show of annoyed surprise at the junior officer's impolite bruskness to an Allied officer.

"SO THAT'S what you meant, Lieutenant Von Schoeler, when you said you'd be giving commands to the Americans?" Captain Knighton charged him in German. "I suppose you hadn't figured on an adjourned meeting of survivors

of the old class down here, had you?"

"*Je ne comprends pas,*" said the other, feigning surprise. "I do not understan' ze language of ze Boche."

"See here, Von Schoeler," snapped Knighton, "let's not waste time and words in subterfuge. Look at me closely. Observe the fact again that there is a mild curve in the line of my nose, that there is a slight perpendicular line between my eyes. You will note, also, that slightly to the right of the jugular vein on my neck is a small mole. Now let me remind you of the peculiar scar under your own right eye. Shaving your beard does not conceal your identity from one who knows you as well as I do. In fact, you wore no beard when we were at Heidelberg together."

"*Gott in Himmel!*" cried Von Schoeler, dropping his masquerade. "I thought you were at Fere-en-Tardenois. Safely—er—"

"Safely dead from a fusillade of German bullets. I finish the sentence for you since you are hesitant. Well, little thanks to you that I am not food for worms at this moment. But you counted too strongly on your boasted German superintelligence. That conceit will be the undoing of all you Germans yet."

"Plewe—then Plewe must have helped you," Von Schoeler guessed shrewdly.

"But that doesn't alter the fact that the Allied Secret Service outwitted you, does it, Von Schoeler?"

"*Der Schweinhund!*" swore the Prussian as the final crushing truth of Plewe's allegiance was flaunted in his face.

"If I may borrow a phrase from you," Knighton smiled, "let me remind you that you do a brave and loyal officer a very grave injustice by such a remark."

Von Schoeler took refuge in an air of nonchalance.

"It appears that I am now at your mercy, my friend," he said. "Need I remind you that I was generous enough to offer you an alternative to a German firing squad? Am I to expect like consideration at your hands?"

"I will be more considerate of you than you were of me, Von Schoeler," replied the American. "I will not insult you by asking you to betray your country as the price of your life."

"So you are bloodthirsty, my friend?"

"On the contrary. If I had any voice in the matter I would be satisfied to send you to a prison camp for the duration of the war. Since I have no right of decision, I must leave your fate to those who have. But I shall not appear against you. It is my duty to inform the colonel who you are. After that, I wash my hands of you."

"Then I may count upon you—perhaps for some leniency from the Americans?" Von Schoeler hung forward eagerly.

"I can't see how it is any of our affair. Certainly it will not be for us to meddle in an affair of this sort, Von Schoeler. You must see that clearly enough for yourself."

"I do not believe I gather what you mean, my friend."

"Simply this. You are here in French military uniform, bearing forged French orders. Certainly that establishes your status. It will be up to the French to handle your case and deal with you according to their laws and customs in such cases."

Von Schoeler was shaken out of his pose by this disclosure. His face became livid.

"*Mein Gott!*" he cried. "Those bloodthirsty French. It is death at the rising of the sun."

"I'm sorry, Von Schoeler," said Knighton. "But your blood will not be on my hands. And if it turns out as badly as your fear, I'm confident you will live up to the traditions of the—the old class from Heidelberg."

The CAMP-FIRE

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A Glossary of The Veld

E. VAN LIER RIBBINK, a Boer author well known in other publications, but making his first appearance in *Adventure* with the novelette "Oom Paul's Gold", has compiled a glossary of words and phrases commonly used by his countrymen. Because of the newly reawakened interest in South Africa—new diamond fields and gold discoveries—this concise glossary may be worth while preserving.

Allemachtig—Almighty! (Boer-Dutch expletive.)
bayete—Zulu greeting, reserved for royalty.
blesbok—a variety of South African antelope.
bezigheid—business (Dutch).
bosveld—bush-veld (a plain, interspersed with bush).
bosveldmusse—bushveld sparrows.
daar—there (Dutch).
dagga—Bantu name for intoxicating weed smoked by the kaffirs.
dhow—an Arab vessel used by traders on the African East Coast and elsewhere.
die hoge veld—"the high veld" (Boer Dutch). A plateau-plain, denuded of bush.
doornbome—"thorn trees." A fair-sized South African tree, completely covered with long, white thorns, or needles.
dop—a cheap brand of Cape brandy (Boer-Dutch).
ek rook dagga—"I smoke dagga." (Boer-Dutch.)
gooi assagai—"throw-assagai"—a short spear.
haarts toorts—resin-torch (Boer-Dutch).
haastig—"hasty" (Boer-Dutch).
hoor—hear! (Dutch.)
impala—a reddish-brown Bushveld antelope, with straight, long horns.
impi—a Zulu regiment, of between two and three thousand men.

indaba—Zulu word for "meeting," or "counsel."
induna—Zulu chieftain, commander of an *impi*.
inkoos—meaning "Great Lord"—often used to address white men. (A Zulu word.)
intombe—a large African tree (Zulu).
kaiman—crocodile (Boer-Dutch).
kalabas—gourd, or calabash (Boer-Dutch).
kapje—a bonnet worn by Boer women, completely shading the face.
karosses—a voluminous, sleeveless garment, or toga, made of Jackal, buck or leopard skins.
kehlas—Zulu warriors. A *kehla* is a mature warrior, entitled to wear the head-ring denoting rank.
kiries—sticks with big knobs, used by all Bantu tribes.
klip—stone, or rock (Boer-Dutch).
kaya—native hut.
kombeers—blanket (Boer-Dutch).
kop—hill (Boer-Dutch), also meaning 'head.' Depends on syntax.
kopje—little hill. (Boer-Dutch.)
korhaan—small African bustard. (Boer-Dutch.)
kos—food (Boer-Dutch.)
kyk!—look! (Boer-Dutch.)
jager—hunter. (Dutch.)
laager—fortified encampment, used by Boers in native warfare. (In former years formed by ox-wagons drawn in a circle).
lagavaan—huge lizard, of amphibious habits, found in S. Africa.
matagati—Zulu word for magician.
manzi—water.
meerkat—small South African mongoose.
moocha—loin cloth of buckskin (Zulu.)
ntombe—or *intombe*, S. A. tree.
paadjes—small paths, or tracks, formed by kaffirs walking in single file.
pompelmoes—a huge, soft S. African fruit, of the citrus family. Of bitter taste.
riet—reeds.
skepsels—creatures. Used by Boers in speaking of natives.
skiet!—shoot! (Boer-Dutch.)
stad—town (Dutch).
Taal—Language, meaning the Boer-Dutch or "Afrikaans" form.
tamboike—Tamboekie—a rank veld grass, reaching a great height.
tronk—Boer-Dutch for 'jail'.
umfaans—boys (*Zulu*).
umlungu—white man (Bantu).
unganaam—friend (Bantu).
vaalpens—yellow-belly. Applied to Hottentots. Also, jocularly, to inhabitants of Transvaal.
voetsak—Beat it! (Boer-Dutch.)
voorttrekkers—the Boer pioneers. Literally "those-that-trekked-before."
wach-een-beetje—Wait-a-bit! (Boer-Dutch). Also applied to a certain bush.
wiedaar—"Who goes there!" (Boer-Dutch). A call of sentinels.
witman—white man (Boer-Dutch).
Xosa—the name of Bantu tribe.

AND THEN a word about the story, and his own background for fiction. Oom Ribbink has the floor . . .

As you will recall, Oom Paul, whom I knew personally when I was yet a boy, was the name by which that grand old Boer *voortrekker*, President Paul Kruger of the Transvaal, was affectionately known to his people—"Oom" meaning "Uncle" in Boer-Dutch. Incidentally, and apart from the story, my father, Gerrit Ribbink, now deceased, was one of Paul Kruger's right-hand men, and was sent by the President as Commissioner to administer the territory of Swaziland, which had just been conquered by the Boers. This my father did at the head of *only* twenty-five mounted "Zarps", or Republican Police—but all of that is another story!

The story which I have sent you is based on an historical fact, and deals with the lost gold, which was shipped out of South Africa by Kruger, just before the British entered Johannesburg and Pretoria during the Boer War.

The solution of the mystery I have founded on a Zulu legend, which probably is more than a mere legend, and which sets forth that, somewhere in the interior of Africa, near the East Coast, there yet dwells a tribe, kindred in blood, language and customs to the Ama-Zulu, most warlike of African tribes. This legend, saying that the Ama-Zulu nation, before entering South Africa, did split into two parts, one traveling south and the other due east of the *Mosi-Oa-Tunya* (The-Smoke-That-Thunders)—otherwise the Victoria Falls of the Zambesi—is set forth. The personality of the "Inkoosiezana" is actually based on fact, since one of the Bantu nations was ruled, at one time, by a chieftainess of mixed blood and great beauty.

The character of King Dop, whom I have described as the Brigham Young of South Africa, residing with his harem in Lourenço Marques, is likewise authentic. I met this remarkable chap in Delagoa in 1903. For obvious reasons I have changed his name.

The *rencontre* with the tree mamba took place in my presence on the Krokodil Rivier, Rustenburg, Transvaal, The diving kaffirs, the fight between the hippopotamus cow, her calf, and the croc, are also founded on actual occurrences—as are the descriptions of the swamp and the Ancient Place or Ruin. The latter, of course, is founded on the mysterious ruins of Zimbabwe and Khami in Rhodesia, both of which science ascribes to ancient Phoenician penetration of Darkest Africa.

The war dance was inspired by a ceremony witnessed repeatedly by myself, including the *mayi-hlome* or Zulu call to arms.

—E. VAN LIER RIBBINK, Oakland, Cal.

Old Copies

Address directly, M. L. Mitchell, 317 Twentieth Street, Toledo, Ohio.

CHAIN GANG

If a man ain't sorry he done it
When he's making time on the gang,
He wouldn't be sorry he done it
If he was sentenced to hang.

Oh, they roust you out at sunrise and you don't get in till dark;
And while you eat your meat and beans the guards keep up a bark
Of "Tighten on them rations now and let's get on the job!"
Or "Hurry and get in that cage—yes, *you*, you dirty slob!"

Rock ain't soft, but for something hard
I'd pick the heart of a convict guard!

They lock you in a cage at night soon as you've gulped your feed;
In thirty minutes "ring you down", you cannot talk or read:
You crawl into your lousy bunk and nurse your shacks and chains:
In summer, bake; in winter, freeze; you sleep wet if it rains.

Wake up, bulls, and spit on the rock!
It ain't quite day but it's four o'clock!

Before daylight begins to show the night-guard pounds a gong;
You worm into your stinking stripes, mud-stiff and stale-sweat strong:
They count you out the cages and they rush you through your slum,
Your heart's as heavy as your chains at thought of what's to come.

One of these days I'm gonna tell the Man,
"Cool kind Cap'n, catch me if you can:
"Goodbye, Cap'n, I'm putting on the fan!"

Then it's, "Tighten, bullies, tighten, on the spade and on the pick,
"The whipping-boss is raring to try a brand-new lick.
"The Big-Hat-Man is raucous for he stayed out late last night,
"So you had better move that dirt and build that road up right!"

The work ain't hard and the Cap ain't mean;
The beans are fat and the meat is lean;
But the days are long and the pay is small;
I'll take my time and fool 'em all!

Oh, it's "Wave it, bull gang, wave it! Wave it and pitch it, too!
"The whipping-boss is honing to try his strop on you:
"He'll stretch you cross a barrel with a nigger on your head,
"And stomp sand in the leather to be sure it draws the red!"

Jus' a year ago, I'll tell you a fack,
I didn't know a strad-chain from a double-shack!

Oh, it's "Tighten, tighten, tighten!" that one long hard refrain;
It's "Wave it" in the sunshine and it's "Pitch it" in the rain."
It's "Fill them shovels, dam' you, till the handle's got some, too";
It's "Sink them picks up to the eye, or hell tonight for you!"

Water-jack, water-jack,
Oughter been here and half-way back!

"Don't give 'em so much water; they ain't working hard enough!
"If you want a cup of 'cooling' you have got to strut your stuff.
"You shads don't want the water—just the time to drink it in;
"You'd holler for the water-boy in water to your chin!"

Twelve months ain't no sentence,
A thousand dollars ain't no fine:
Just think about that pore son of a gun,
That's making ninety-nine!

—COURTNEY McCURDY

MAGPIE SIMPKINS,
Sheriff of Piperock

Drawing by W. C. Tuttle

Strong Men

COMRADE PARKE tells me he was reading proof in the Sears, Roebuck printing building, at the time I was trying (very humbly) to assist in selling mackinaws by mail. Remember, Brother Parke, that August day when bells jangled, whistles blew—and the unbelievable news came that Germany had crossed the Belgian frontier? Much blood and hearbreak poured through the sluiceway before those whistles blew again . . . .

Then southward, and a word of fakes and feats:

Recalling strong men—I used to report the old-time dime museum in New Orleans and later on the first "Floating Palace", skippered by the famous Eugene Robinson, and I got next to lots of fake strong-man acts. Once put on a stunt at an amateur entertainment, in which I did the following—although I weighed but 128 pounds, and am 5 feet, 8 inches tall.

Breaking a chain across the biceps; snapping a strap that would hold up four men; cracking a block of one-inch marble with the naked fist; allowing a strong man to strike full-arm sledge blows on a paving block carried on the chest, while forming a "bridge"; and lifting a platform on which was a good sized pony, using the legs and hips. All of these are partially tricks, as was also the stunt of tearing a new deck of cards in half with the naked hands. So I am somewhat skeptical of the feats of strong men.

However, we have a blacksmith in New Orleans—

Albert Perreand—who once gave an exhibition of strength that was rather remarkable. He is about 5 feet, 9 inches tall, and weighed then about 170 pounds, being mostly bone and sinew. He caught a medium sized Jersey ox by the horn and started to put on the yoke, but the critter was young and irrational and of no mind to be yoked up after a good dinner. The ox dragged Al all around the front lot, while the gang encouraged the animal and razzed the driver. Finally Al got a grip on an oak sapling about two inches around and stopped the scrambling. The animal pulled and the man held on, so finally the unlucky sapling lost its grip in the ground and came up by the roots. But a rail fence finally stopped the pair and the yoke was fastened.

Al has always been noted as being able to do as much work as three men, in the shipyard where he labors.

In the way of feats of strength, I am sure that even the feeblest person can, in moments of excitement, perform to amaze the observer. In one instance myself, a sixteen year-old negro boy, a girl of twenty and an old woman, together carried an upright piano out of a burning house, across a muddy street and two high curbings and deposited it in a neighbor's yard. After the fire we tried to handle it again and our united efforts would scarcely lift it off the ground.—GEORGE PARKE, 216 College Avenue, Tallahassee, Fla.

Why Not Electrocute Him?

DOES ANYONE remember Ring Lardner's youngsters in "The Wake of the News" (*Chicago Tribune*) years ago? Usually they were seated at breakfast table, spooning in cereal.

"I'm God, I think." A piece of toast got speared. This was an Old Testament God, doing the spearing.

"I'll kill you, I think." Truculently a six-year-old would massacre a glass of milk.

Well—I'm shocked, I think. I see no reason for sentimental mercy such as has been shown in this latest exemplification of the American Law. The very thought of letting (practically) free this young Kentucky fiend, this coldblooded something-or-other, fairly makes one froth at the mouth. Haven't we a rack lying around somewhere? Doesn't some Chicago big-shot racketeer recall the technique of drawing and quartering? And are there no irons hot?

Boy, 6, Tried for Manslaughter; Sent to Reformatory Until 21

Special to the New York Herald Tribune

PAINTSVILLE, Ky., May 23.—Carl Mahan, six and one-half years old, this afternoon was found guilty of manslaughter by a Johnson County Jury and sentenced to the State Reform School until he is twenty-one years old. He killed Cecil Vanhoose, his eight-year-old playmate, last Saturday. He was quoted as saying "he meant to kill the Vanhoose boy".

Carl was put on trial here today before a jury of twelve farmers and coal miners.

According to Carl's story, he and Cecil were seeking scrap iron to sell, and Carl had found the prize piece of iron of the hunt.

Cecil, Carl said, tried to take it away from him and succeeded, being older and stronger. The younger boy, it is charged went to his home, climbed up on a chair, got his father's shotgun off the wall and went back and shot his playmate. How the boy who is the size of an average six-year-old, ever held the heavy gun is a mystery.

When the trial opened, the defense, evidently fearing that the judge planned to send the boy to reform school, demanded a jury. Carl, apparently did not realize he had killed his playmate or that he was being tried. He appeared unusually bright for his age, and answered questions readily. He is the son of John Mahan, a taxicab driver.

The slain boy's father is a railroad fireman. He hired counsel to aid the prosecution, while Mahan engaged a lawyer for his son.

Carl today was surrounded by playmates during the progress of his trial. He laughed and played while the two stricken mothers wept.

Samuel Stapleton, county attorney, admitted there was no precedent in Kentucky law for the prosecution of one so young on a charge of manslaughter. The Kentucky statutes stipulate that a child less than ten years old cannot be held to account in such a case, and it was up to the jury to decide what should be done with Carl."

I'm not ordinarily vindictive; but when twelve good men and true can come to a conclusion such as this, I am thankful for my sins. May they increase in magnitude. May they win me the right to wield the hottest pitchfork in Hades. I'll have splendid use for it . . .

—ANTHONY M. RUD

ASK Adventure

For Free Information and Services You Can't Get Elsewhere

Canoe Sail

HOW to fashion a lateen rig.

Request:—"I would like to ask you some questions on a canoe sail and sailing. The canoes are wooden models—16 feet long—30 inches wide. They have rather a flat bottom and are hard to tip over.

These canoes are in use at the local Chattanooga Y. M. C. A. Camp during the summer. The boys using them will be expert swimmers and have no more than a bathing suit on. So a larger sail even if more unsteady will be O. K. The winds are usually fairly steady, but not strong. The lake is about 10 to 12 miles long and runs from ¼ to ½ mile wide.

Now for those questions:

1. What material would you advise?

2. Size and shape of sail (I would prefer a single sail)?

3. How would you advise rigging the sail up? (Booms, mast-pulleys, etc.)

4. Size and shape of leeboards?

I can obtain the use of a heavy machine to sew the sail up. One of the other leaders is a manual training instructor and he can make the wooden parts. We can get bamboo poles for the booms if you think that would be best.

We really need a few pointers on handling a canoe with a sail. It will be a new experience for me and the rest of the crowd, too. If you know of any book or books which will really give us some 'dope' on this or care to write me a few general hints yourself I will be much obliged."—BEN TEESE, New York, N. Y.

Reply, by Mr. Edgar S. Perkins:—1. I would advise good spruce for all of your spars.

2. & 3. The lateen rig would be the most logical, or a marconi if you so desire. The latter is considered a bit faster in sailing.

The lateen sail is made in the form of an equilateral triangle; and two sides are made fast to spars which are connected at one end by a set of interlocking screw eyes in the end of each spar. The mast, which is just aft or back of the bow seat, should be long enough so that when the sail is spread and the slanting upper spar is swung from the top of the mast, the lower spar will swing fairly level with a tendency to tilt upwards at the after or back end about six or eight inches above the gunwales; and the forward end of course to clear all parts of the boat in going about. The triangle should measure about nine feet on each side. The lower spar has a jaw that holds it against the mast.

4. Leeboards of cedar about 28 inches long and ten inches wide and three-eighths to a half inch thick.

Panama

THE JUNGLE is rich in drug yielding plants, even one from which is decocted a solution to intoxicate fish!

Request:—"Does Panama offer any opportunity in the field of drug products from the jungle?"

—JOSEPH SROKA, Kansas City, Mo.

Reply, by Mr. Charles Bell Emerson:—Panama certainly has many drug products tucked away in its jungles.

There have been reported the following:

Copaiba—Furnishes a valuable balsam, used in venereal diseases.

Turpentine.

Copal—Furnishes the well known copal varnish.

Palma Christi—A soft tree-like plant that produces a nut from which castor oil is made.

Hule, or *Caoutchouc.* (India Rubber), "Castilloa elastica"—Grows 40 feet high, and 2 feet diameter. Very large leaves. Trunk straight and smooth. Wood is soft and of no value. A new process has been discovered of making rubber from the leaves, which will yield 5 or 6 crops per year.

Gutta Percha (Tuno)—A tree about 30 feet high and 1½ to 2 feet in diameter. Large leaves, straight trunk, and resembles the rubber tree. The Poya

Indians make a kind of cloth from the bark, stripping it off in large sheets as possible, macerating it in water and pounding for a long time on a block of wood. They use it principally for bedding.

El Balsamo or Balsam de Peru—Abundant in the mountains of Sigratepeque, Honduras.

Sarsaparilla—The best quality produced in the world, and in great abundance on the whole of the north coast.

Cinchona or *quinine* tree (or Peruvian Bark)—Quinine of commerce is made from the bark.

Vanilla—A vine bearing the celebrated fragrant bean which is here notable for the large size of the pods, which sells in the U. S. A. from $8 to $15 per pound, and can often be bought from the native collectors as low as 50 cents per pound.

Also reported are *ipecacuanha, Jalap, croton, hellebore, aconite, condurango, belladonna, ginger, aloes, rhubarb, licorice, Tonka beans* (sometimes used instead of the vanilla bean. The *Tonka* is from a shrubby plant of Guiana. *Kola-nut, camphor of Formosa, Coco, quisquis* or *quiscamo* (or tania), and *podophyllum,* from the root of the *granadillo* vine (or May Apple), and others in countless variety, the virtues of which are well known to the natives.

Huaco or *Guaco serpentaria*—A parasitical vine; is an efficacious remedy for snake bites.

Espino Blanco—The root is used, macerated in hot water and taken internally, and also applied to the bite.

Cedron—A soft nut that cuts like soft pine, said to be equally efficacious. Also the seeds of the *snake akro,* which is a vegetable, made into a paste and applied as a poultice and also taken internally. Also the plant known as the *eryngo* is known to do the work. (But snakes are not so numerous as some people would have us believe.)

The natives use a vine called *chilpate*; this is pounded to a pulp and a decoction made in water. When this solution is thrown into the stream where there are fish, the fish become so drunk that they can be gathered or caught with the hands. (A very unsportsmanlike proceeding.)

Cacao (chocolate)—The government paid a bonus of 10 cents for each tree planted, provided not less than 2,000 were planted.

There are many others, but this will give you an idea of the profusion of drug products to be taken in the jungle.

Rattler

FACT and fiction concerning his bite.

Request:—"Having seen your name in *Adventure Magazine* as 'Ask Adventure' expert on herpetology, I am moved to ask your opinion on a point that was used as the chief support of a plot in a story I read some time ago in one of our leading magazines.

A man was bitten by a rattlesnake and died. He was wearing knee boots at the time and following his death, one of his brothers fell heir to them. A few days after first wearing them the man's leg began to swell and subsequently, he too died. Another brother wore the boots and soon developed symptoms of snake bite, and died.

Now the point of the story was this: The fang of the rattler was embedded in the leather of the boots in such a position as to be able to scratch the skin of any one who wore them.

Would it be possible for a rattlesnake to strike with sufficient force to drive a fang into tough rawhide? And would the tooth retain enough poison to cause the death of three men after having broken from the mouth of the snake?"

—Lee Penrose, Bronxville, N. Y.

Reply, by Mr. Clifford H. Pope:—Your letter describing the story based on the lodging of a fang in a boot really asks two questions:

The first concerns the ability of a rattlesnake to drive its fangs through good leather and can scarcely be answered with definiteness. A large diamondback has a head about three inches across and fangs that are very sharp and long enough to penetrate boot leather. Such a head driven forward rapidly might possibly send a fang through a boot and reach the flesh providing the leg were tight against the leather. It is highly improbable that the fang actually would get through and most likely the trouser leg or sock or both would prevent its reaching the flesh. You have here a most highly improbable possibility which practically speaking (and in my personal opinion) amounts to an impossibility.

The second question, i. e., whether or not such a fang lodged in a boot could cause the death of a second wearer through snake-bite symptoms, presents an out and out impossibility. By no chance could enough poison be lodged in the fang to do more than cause local irritation.

Ghost Dances

SITTING BULL rises again in connection with a mysterious cult of the Southwest tribes.

Request:—"Can you tell me anything about 'ghost dancing' among the Southwestern Indian tribes?

What scrappy information I have so far on this subject comes from McLaughlin's 'My Friend the Indian,' and Cody's autobiography. McLaughlin treats of the cult quite fully up to the death of Sitting Bull, and then leaves off saying that the world already knows the sequel. Cody makes a definite reference to the 'Ghost Dance War' and says that he could have averted it if he had been allowed to proceed with his commission to arrest Sitting Bull, in the fall of 1890. But he again gives no outline of the war, beyond stating that the final surrender marked the finish of Indian fighting in the U. S. forever.

McLaughlin attributes the start of the cult to 'some genius of the Southwestern tribes,' as the Sioux of his reservation (Standing Rock) said that it came from a people 'beyond the Yellow Faces to the west of the Utes.' Cody says that even the Yaquis promised aid to the Indians in the event of any general

uprising. All of which makes me think that there may have been some trouble with the Indians in your territory—the States of California, Oregon, and Nevada, and Territories of Utah and Arizona. If any such trouble did occur, is it too much to ask for a brief summary of it?"

—G. E. S. TURNER, Oxford, England.

Reply, by Mr. E. E. Harriman:—My information regarding "ghost dances" and my memory of them say that while there were sporadic cases of ghost dancing in the Southwest, it at no time caused any uprising worthy of the name. The idea of a coming Messiah for the Indians may have originated in the Southwest among tribes under Roman Catholic influence, but it certainly did not cause the trouble that the great nation of the Dakotas caused and which in one instance of note involved their ancient, implacable enemy the Chippewa or Ojibwa tribe. I have lived here since February 20, 1886, and have known of only Apache and Ute war medicine having been made and that not through ghost dancing.

Geronimo led his Apache hellions in a wildly tremendous campaign of butchery from entirely different causes. The Apaches are now peaceful stockmen, raising Hereford cattle, as the Navajo raises sheep. The Ute does little farming himself, but is a valuable hired man for the white farmer, as his land is leased, generally to Mormons in Utah.

The Paiute works for the Inyo County white farmer in California and his squaw drives a Ford, Dodge, Buick or other car to town and does laundry work for white women, under backyard shade trees.

Caribbean

LIVING need not cost you much in the Windward or Leeward Islands if you don't go sick because the beef is tough and the icewater warm.

Request:—"Being a reader of *Adventure,* I wish to ask you some questions in regard to Caribbean waters and islands of that section.

In view of a proposed health and recreation trip, what are the best islands for a man to visit, and what work, sports and general health building opportunities exist, if any?

What are the best routes to sail over, and can experience be had on sailing vessels, *via* New Orleans? Can a trip be worked or made cheaply there?"—G. CROWL, Greensburg, Pa.

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—First of all, I refer you to that part of *Ask Adventure* dealing with "The Sea, American Waters," for your information regarding shipping out of New Orleans.

Concerning your other questions, so far as I am aware about the only places where a stranger can earn a living temporarily are winter resorts like Nassau or Havana, or the bigger places in Jamaica, Porto Rico, etc., and it would surely be impossible to get in health pursuits, sports, or anything else of a vacational nature in these places at the busy season.

You'll be competing with negroes, because all the jobs a white man can hold are usually well and promptly filled. Since you speak of working your way, I presume you have no intention of settling, and about the only cheap places are the smaller islands where there is little work at which you could earn money. By drifting from place to place and being able to jump in and work with black laborers you might spend a lazy six months among the islands, but about your only sports would be fishing, unless you are a clever mechanic, electrician, gas engine man or something similar; if able to become one of the white residential community there is tennis, golf, baseball (Porto Rico and Cuba), cricket (all British islands), plenty of boating.

So far as I know, there are few if any sailing vessels which do much more than make straight voyages from one port to another with a cargo and back home with another cargo. Cruising the islands is almost impossible in one boat unless it is your own. As for making passages from island to island in working vessels, as above said you must compete with black labor, and you'll need to be a good boatman to do that, as well as a good sport to stick it.

YOU ASK about the best routes to sail over, yet give me the impression that you have small resources in funds. If you mean to work your way entirely, you have no choice of route—you must go where you get the chance. If you can pay your way modestly, you might get in a splendid voyage by starting from Nassau, Bahamas, on the Inagua mail schooner for Matthewtown; thence, waiting your chance, by local sailing boat to some Haitian port; from Port au Prince, or Cap Haitien, or almost any other Haitian port you can find a vessel going to Cuba, Jamaica, Honduras; and once in Jamaica, or Cuba, you will have no difficulty in getting passage around the W ndward or Leeward Islands, if you still have passage money. Living need not cost you much, if you are content to live as the islanders live and not go sick just because the beef's tough or the icewater's warm.

I'm afraid I can not give you much advice if you really expect to make such a cruise without funds, because frankly I do not know how it can be done and still go to chosen islands with a view to sports and health seeking. You could live cheaply enough and get health in juicy gobs by simply loafing on the beach of one of the Bahamas, and living expenses, eked out by fishing, need not be more than five dollars a week if you live with a native family.

Railroad

THE outlook for railroad telegraphy in view of new inventions for communication.

Request:—"I would like to know just what your views are as to railroad telegraphy. Do you think these new inventions will ruin the R. R. and commercial telegrapher's trade?"

—A. J. JONES, Ewing, Tex.

Reply, by Mr. R. T. Newman:—Of course many of the roads are using telephones instead of the telegraph machine today in transmitting messages and train orders, and naturally the new inventions will effect the telegraph service some, but in regards to telegraph operators, they will take up the operation of the new inventions also, so there you are.

It is like this: The railroads are making a big fuss, or were some time ago, over the bus and the truck, when they first came out; now there are thousands of trucks and buses used by the railroad themselves, and they are hooking up in the cooperation of plane trips from coast to coast, and today the railroads have the finest equipment, and still getting finer equipment for passenger service, and placing large orders for locomotives. Although we know this bus and truck business hurts the railroads on the short hauls only, they seem to be handling more tonnage in freight and passenger business just the same.

There are many electric locomotives used by the railroads in the United States today, but still the most of them seem to stand by the old iron steam horse. So it is, I think, with our new inventions—some roads will take them on, in offices, and territories where they work out to better satisfaction than the telegraph, but not in your or my time will they effect the telegraph to any great extent.

Great Smokies

CAROLINA and Tennessee country of great scenic beauty.

Request:—"I am writing to find out about the new park in the Great Smokies. Where is it to be and what counties in Tennessee will it take in? What is price of land in the big mountains away from the high class neighborhoods? I suppose there are lots of towns with electric lights now or the power will be there soon."

—J. B. IDE, Orchard Lake, Mich.

Reply, by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, now in process of creation, will embrace some 425,000 acres in Cooke, Sevier and Blount Counties, Tennessee, and Swain and Haywood Counties, North Carolina, lying along the state line between the Pigeon and the Little Tennessee Rivers. Of this area approximately half will be in each State.

The Smokies, a segment of the Unaka Chain, compose the roughest and wildest part of the southern mountains; in fact, of all the eastern mountains. The most spectacular feature is Mt. Le Conte, which has been called one of the notable mountains of the country. Aside from its wonderful scenic features, the Smokies are remarkable for their varied forests and plant life in general. More than 135 different species of forest trees have been identified there, a greater variety than can be found on any similar area in the Temperate Zones.

Price of land in the mountain country varies according to the location, accessibility, timber, etc. The National Forest Service pays from $3.00 up for cut-over land. Quite a bit of land in the National Park area has cost better than $20.00 per acre, and that bearing the best timber will run far above that figure.

Practically every little village now has electric lights, as do thousands of country homes. Excellent roads criss-cross the country, automobiles penetrate the valleys of the mountains, and the whole section is as prosperous and well developed as you can find anywhere. I except the hinterland of Smoky, for its ruggedness has preserved its primitive wildness to a large extent, but the old days of the rude. illiterate mountaineer and back-woodsman are practically gone.

Photography

MR. PAUL L. ANDERSON, photography expert for this department, calls attention to the fact that fully 90 per cent. of the questions that come up to bother the beginner, are answered thoroughly and clearly in the Eastman Kodak Company book, "How To Make Good Pictures," procurable at all dealers.

Yucatan

MAYA ruins and zoological specimens.

Request:—"I am one of five men planning to go by small boat, 28 feet over all, from this port to Yucatan in June. We plan to land on the north or west coast of Compeche or Yucatan and make short inland trips on foot to get zoological specimens and explore Maya ruins.

Can you tell me what we can expect to find in the way of birds, animals and snakes? How far we can expect to go in a day? What weather we will encounter in June or July? Is there any unexplored territory near the north or west coast? Will implements be necessary to clear a way for us? Are the natives friendly?

While we are not lacking in experience in other places, none of us has been on that peninsula. Nor were we able to get much assistance at the local library. Books on the subject of Yucatan seem to be confined to the description of a few ruins located near the leading cities. The latest Rand and McNally atlas shows very little of value, beyond the location of ports. A government chart obtained from the hydrographic department gives some information as to the waters but there are many questions we have been unable to find answers to. If you will help us, we will appreciate it very much."

—NOLAN SANFORD, Houston, Texas.

Reply, by Mr. W. Russell Sheets:—How glorious! An adventure you will never forget. I wish I might go with you, but alas, I'm wreckage of the last De la Huerta revolution! Don't let the present one deter you from your purpose. They are quite interesting

as a side issue if one occurs while you are there.

I happened to go down there in charge of an expedition to the Maya ruins of Yucatan. They are very interesting to an archeologist. Most of the ruins and all of the interesting ones lie in Yucatan or just south of the state line. All of the birds, wild animals, snakes, etc., flourish south into Campeche. In June and July, you will encounter the tropical rainy season—the right time to go in. It is cooler and you will have less difficulty finding drinking water which will always be your biggest problem.

I suggest you sail to Campeche and establish your base there. You will find the American Chicle Co. representative there and he will help you immensely. If it is Mr. Kaplan, present yourselves as introduced by me. Be sure to look up Don Candalario Carpizo in the same wise and sail down the coast to his hacienda and tell him I still hope to drill an oil well just back of his *bodega* when all the Mexican generals are dead.

Sail up the coast to Jaina to see those ruins. There is a canal dug in from thereabouts (I think the outlet is called Yol-ton) to *arruganagga's* hacienda "San Simmon." This inland waterway ought to show you lots of what you are looking for. It may be best for one of you to run up to Merida on the train and meet this family (they live on the north side of the *plaza grande*) first.

Next door to their home is dear old Don Rafael Peon. You must meet him and draw him out. His life bristles like Pizzaro's of old. He has raised bulls of such fame that they were shipped to Spain! He built Chunchumil in six months to entertain and feast Porfirio Diaz that his son, then in Oxford, might be sent direct to Paris as Ambassador—but the revolution a month later that ruined Diaz not only precluded that hope but swept away his second fortune. He gathered his five hundred families and their belongings together, commandeered a train and migrated to Peto, where he unloaded and moved south into the unknown region south of Lake Chichancanab.

Three years later, peace lay upon the land again and he appeared on the Gulf Coast with his colony and enough dye wood to start him up again at Chunchuc and build up the greatest *henequen* hacienda in all that land. He can inform you better of that unexplored interior which is your goal than most any one. His son I mentioned will be a gracious surprise to you.

In Merida, visit the store of W. W. James and meet Dave Goff. They are the American headquarters of archeological visitors and welcome any one from home.

You can sail south from Campeche to the Champoton river and up that a long way. You ought to have an outboard. If there is an American resident on the hacienda San Pablo, you might make profitable excursions out from it to find the specimens you are after.

La Guna is a charming island and supports several American residents. You can sail across and up the river to the Laguna Corp. properties and then go into the interior again from there.

All these places I'm mentioning are taking-off locations where you can outfit from mules and men down to go in to the interior. You won't have so much trouble as you think. You can get everything you need there except high top, heavy bottom, waterproof leather boots and heavy khaki breeches and shirts that will resist thorns.

I wouldn't advise any weapon that might be classed as useful in a revolution. All you will need is a .22 and 12-gauge shotguns and the ammunition you will need for them. Take several wool blankets! All your travel inland will be by pack trains. Meal bags fare better on narrow trails and under low limbs than the corners of suitcases! Travel light. If you can sleep in hammocks procurable, you will do best to use them.

By the way, forget your map of the interior once you get to Campeche. They are just wrong enough to keep you from ever striking any place you orient yourselves for. Natives can be found with an uncanny way of arriving straight through the jungles at any place you tell them you wish to reach! They will do all the cutting necessary and you must never go in without one of these Indians who can locate waterholes and the kind of palms that hold about a quart of water that has saved many a life—my own included.

Fishing

HOW to lure muskies and bass.

Request:—"My buddies and I plan a trip up to Northern Wisconsin and Michigan. I would like to know what we need. What kind of equipment for fishing and camping? We are going by auto, there will be two of us, and both beginners in fishing and camping."—ERWIN THOMAS, Chicago, Ill.

Reply, by Mr. John B. Thompson:—Since you are contemplating a fall fishing trip in Wisconsin you will reach those parts when musky and bass fishing is at its best.

As you are novices in casting and want to get right down to immediate actual fishing, I suggest you provide yourself with a South Bend Level Winding Anti-backlash reel. Then you can enjoy your sport as though you had been used to it.

Most of the artificial lures take bass, but be sure and bring along a bass prano, of the red head, white body type. I am very partial to them, and also for muskies a wooden lure called the surf-oreno. I have had great success with the latter. They are a surface bait. My custom is to straighten out the spinners at the head, flatter than they are when they are bought, reel them slowly and in a jerky fashion. These spinners cause a spluttering commotion which sure attracts big muskies and pike.

An ordinary five and half foot casting rod and fifteen or eighteen pound test line for muskies will help a lot. Provide yourself with enough baits so if the fish are not hitting one kind they will hit another.

If you have no regular auto tent, an ordinary 5x7 or 7 x 9 wall tent will serve your purpose, with a small cooking outfit. Carry along a sod cloth for this weather, and also extra suit of woolen underwear, flannel shirt, khaki or duck clothes and a windbreaker or sweater, also a slicker.

Ship

SOME statistics on the famous clipper, *Flying Cloud.*

Request:—"I have recently constructed a scale model of the old clipper ship *Flying Cloud* and it is a beauty. The scale is ⅛ inch to the foot and makes the model from the tip of the jib to the stern about thirty-seven inches. Have constructed all of the rigging, both standing and running, and it is complete in every detail. In order to round out my scheme I wanted to make a little label giving a history of the ship, but after searching various encyclopedias and all of the books on this subject in our small library all the data I could gather was that it was designed by Donald MacKay and was used in the China tea and opium trade. But I would like further data, which I have listed below:

1. When was keel laid?
2. When was it launched?
3. Total displacement tonnage?
4. Total cargo carrying tonnage?
5. The names of the original owners?
6. Between what ports did it generally run?
7. Fastest time made? (*a*) Boston or New York to San Francisco? (*b*) Boston or New York to China? (That is, if the ship was operated between these ports.)
8. Final disposition of the ship? That is, was it lost at sea or did it change hands several times and was it finally dismantled? If the latter, when?
9. If not too much trouble and you have information please also give me the names of books that deal with these old clipper ships and the names of the publishers."—B. B. BARILA, Las Vegas, N. M.

Reply, by Mr. Harry E. Rieseberg:—In regard to constructing a scale model of the old clipper ship *Flying Cloud:*

1. The keel was laid in 1850.
2. It was launched in 1851.
3. Total displacement, 1782 gross.
4. I have been unable to ascertain the total cargo carrying tonnage.
5. As to the names of the original owners, as near as I can ascertain, they were Jas. Barnes & Company.
6. It generally ran between Boston and New York.
7. The fastest time made was on August 31, 1851, when this vessel sailed from New York to San Francisco and made the trip in eighty-nine days. It is the sailing ship record to this day, and a second time equalled by herself, and a third time in 1860 by the clipper ship *Andrew Jackson.*
8. It was burned in 1874.
9. I would suggest that you secure a copy of the "Yankee Clipper," by William Brown Meloney, for further information, as requested.

Coins

"BULLET" money of Siam, and other matters numismatical.

Request:—"I should like information on some rather widely separated lines of numismatics, as I have indicated in the questions listed below:

1. What can you tell me of the so-called 'bullet' money of Siam: the correct names for the different denominations, when, approximately, it was issued, and in what quantities? I have a set in silver, ranging from one tical (as I have been told) to one-thirty-second tical, and a set in gold of the same range. The gold tical is about halfway in size between the tical and the half in silver. I have been told that there are also, in silver, pieces of 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 ticals, but have never seen any.
2. Can you refer me to a book or books treating of the coinages of China, Annam, Siam and Japan?
3. Can you tell me from what year the years of the Republic of Haiti are reckoned? To illustrate what I mean: I have a brass piece of 25 centimes, of J. P. Boyer, dated only '1 'an 12.' What year is that in our reckoning, and does it refer to the independence of the Republic from France, or to the year of the particular government issuing the coin?
4. Can you refer me to a book classifying or describing the coinage of Haiti?
5. Is there any one work, in English, covering all or the major part of the period from 1600 to the present, with reference to the coinages of the various German states, and the Empire?

I have just seen a reference in the *Numismatic Circular* of Spink & Sons, of London, to a monograph by yourself on *The Coinage of the Mexican Revolutionists.* From whom can I obtain a copy, and at what price? In asking you to refer me to various books, above, I had in mind works following somewhat the method of Head in his "Historia Numorum," though I realize there are few works as thorough and complete; I should like to know, if possible, where these can be obtained, and their probable cost."

—W. W. WOODSIDE, Cambridge, Mass.

Reply, by Mr. Howland Wood:—1. Concerning the "bullet" money of Siam, these were made for several centuries, up to about 1860. Gradually, since then, they have disappeared from circulation, and I understand they have not been current for a number of years. The circulating pieces run from a tamlung or 4-tical piece, 2-tical piece, 1, ½, ¼, ⅛, 1-16, 1-32, and 1-64. The ¼ tical was called a salung; the ⅛, fuang; the 1-16, sik; the 1-32, pai; and the 1-64, att.

There are also sets in silver, made for treasury purposes, and not for circulation, beginning with a 10-tical, and going to 20, 40, and 80 ticals, the largest being known as a catty.

At one or two times, for commemorative or ceremonial purposes, other pieces were made, with different denominations, and they were pieces of 2½ and 1½ ticals. So far as I know, the gold was

issued in only four sizes—2, 1, ½, and ¼ tical weights—with values of 32, 16, 8, and 4 ticals.

2. The best book on the subject is contained in Part Three, Volume Eighteen, of the "Journal of the Siam Society," published at Bangkok in 1924 and 1925. I think you can get this book through Luzac & Company, London.

The best book on Japanese coins is "Coins of Japan," by Muro. This possibly can be supplied by Luzac, or by Kelly & Walsh, Yokohama, Japan. There are several expensive books on the coins of Annam, published in France. Some follow:

"Études Numismatiques," Annam, Paris, 1905.

"Numismatique Annamite," by Desire Lacroix, Saigon, 1900.

Nearly any Oriental bookseller in Paris or London could get you these. There are many books on Chinese coins. The "Stewart Lockhart Collection of Chinese Copper Coins" is the latest book. This and other Chinese books may be gotten through Kelly & Walsh.

3. The Haiti year begins in 1803, which they consider began their independence. They carried this on consistently, into the '40's. There is no book, as far as I know, classifying the coins of Haiti. The rather extensive Forobert collection catalogue, sold by Weyl in the '70's, describes as many of these as I know. I think you can find these volumes in the Boston Public Library, which, by the way, has a very good collection of numismatic books. There is also a very good collection of Oriental numismatic books in the John Robinson Collection, Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts.

5. There is no one book in any language that consistently and comprehensively gives the German coinage from 1600. This information must be taken out from 101 such books and sales catalogues. A most valuable book, taking up briefly European coinage from Roman times to the present century, is "Traite de Numismatique," by Engel and Serrure. This is in several volumes, and is in French. A copy used to be in Bates Hall in the Boston Public Library.

The "Coinage of the Mexican Revolutionists" can be obtained from me, at $2.50. This came out only a month or so ago.

One of the best booksellers for numismatic books is Bernard Quaritch & Company, 11 Grafton Street, W. London. They can supply nearly everything in numismatic books.

As I see that you are interested in numismatics, you should belong to the Boston Numismatic Society. This society meets once a month, and Shephard Pond, 258 Boylston Street, I think, is secretary.

The American Numismatic Association publishes a monthy magazine, *The Numismatist.* I am sending you application blanks, as nearly every collector in the country makes a point of belonging to this Association. Our own Organization, the Society, has a permanent museum and library of over 6000 volumes.

Any time you are in New York, it would be well worth your while to pay us a visit. The use of the Library is free to all.

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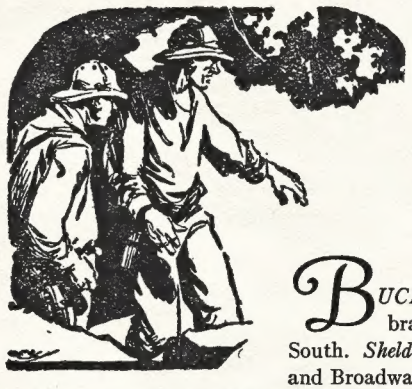
A complete list of the "Ask Adventure" experts appears in the first issue of each month



THE TRAIL AHEAD

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